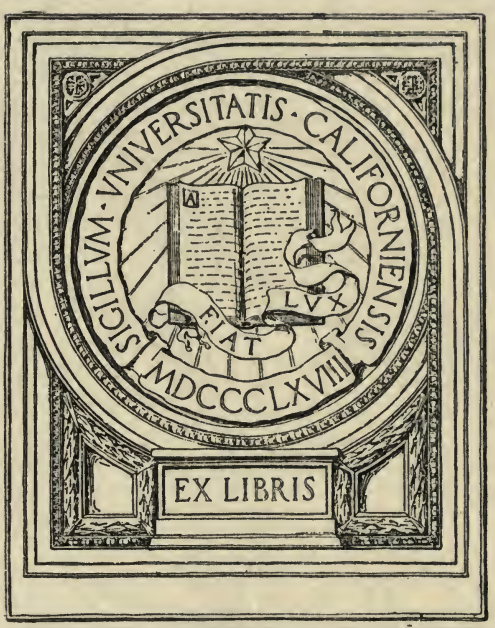



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ITALY AT WAR

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Telerific Transport

Frontispiece

ITALY AT WAR

BY

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"The Servian Tragedy," "Tunisia,"
"Abyssinia," "The Romance of Religion,"
etc., etc.



WITH 19
ILLUSTRATIONS

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

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PREFACE

THE position and influence of the Papacy afford one of the most interesting topics in Italy to-day, and I have inquired into them with diligence; but after careful reflection I have come to the conclusion that the public interest is best served by making no reference whatever to them during the war. Suffice it to say that there are forty clerical deputies in the Chamber, and the Vatican controls two hundred and eighty seats, whose members must take good care not to offend by voting against religious education or any other proposal of great importance to the Clerical Party.

I have sought to emphasise a point of view that is general and increasing in Italy: that it is unworthy of great cities and a great nation to depend unduly on tourists who come to gape idly at noble monuments. But I hope that my neglect of paint and masonry may not be construed as ignorance of the fact that Italy has been the mother of the arts, the torch-bearer of civilisation throughout the dark ages, the creator and giver of all the colours and perfumes and joys still left for dreamers' souls. The point is that, during and after war, Italy must concern herself more particularly with sober, practical matters, such as trade and commerce and the enemy's confusion in every walk of life.

Italy saved Europe when she took the civilised side. Had she continued her misalliance with the Hun and the Austrogoth, France would have been swallowed up,

370055

Russia would have been asphyxiated, and Britain might have required twenty years of resolute warfare to restore her supremacy. Now that victory is in sight, Italy may be hailed as a faithful colleague for the assurance of permanent peace and the emancipation of the oppressed. There must be no hesitation over the fulness of her reward.

I am not an archæologist and this is not a guide-book. It is but a modest volume of impressions by a wandering Christian, who has eschewed the turbulence of towns and sought to pry into the soul of a gracious nation by communing with her humbler children. There are no audiences of Eminences or Excellencies, no pictures of pageants, no ecstasies over cathedrals or chiaroscuro, no words of gush for Cimabue and Giotto.

Perhaps I have chronicled too many trivialities. But they are difficult to exclude from any faithful film; they are the little flicks of paint which go to make up an impressionist canvas; they are no more for critical or microscopic observation than leaves in a landscape. To quote Dante for once: *Non ti curar di lor, ma guarda e passa.*

V.

Rome, *February* 1917.

For permission to make use of eleven photographs on pages 67, 78, 86, 113, 147, 163, 174, 181, 188, 350, and Frontispiece, thanks are hereby tendered to the Italian Supreme Command; acknowledgments are also made to Messrs. Treves of Milan for eight other photographs on pages 96, 130, 143, 158, 339.

Acknowledgments are due to the Editors of the *New Witness*, *Fortnightly Review*, *Westminster Gazette*, *Evening Standard*, *Daily Mirror*, and *Wide World Magazine* for extracts from articles with which I edified their readers.

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UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

ITALY AT WAR

PART I

WAITING FOR WAR

I. FRENCH FUSS

August 1914—*April* 1915

THE Great War found me in the South of France.

I venture to offer a few sharp impressions for comparison with its natural consequence, the Italian War.

At first it was not regarded as by any means a certain consequence that Italy would take the civilised side. Timid tourists began to pack up their trunks in every Swiss hotel in the peninsula, being reminded in guttural tones by gilded hall-porters that there was a scrap of paper called the Triple Alliance. My friend, McPeevish, the captain of a tramp steamer, was at Naples and had serious doubts about the possibility of getting away with his cargo of coal. The consular and diplomatic services could give him no clues: he must act on his own responsibility—in other words, trust to luck. So he conveyed passengers to Malta and lent himself to the British government, with satisfactory results for himself and his owners.

My innkeeper at Villefranche-sur-mer took quite a different tone, but his wishes had fathered his thoughts and one could see that he was anxious. He was a native of Manfredonia, had begun his career as a boot-black at Naples, had dealt in horses and consorted with smugglers, risen at last to the control of a bright, unfrequented hotel with a terrace on the bay: as it was only three miles

from Nice, he lived in hopes that honeymooners would drive over to taste his lobsters. To make a double assault on fortune, he also ran a tailor's shop at Nice, where he would start snipping at cock-crow. When my hotel bill grew unwieldy, I would encourage him by opening an account with him as a tailor.

For months I had shared the big, bare dining-room with a French-American seamstress, a Serbian grass-widow, and the noisiest Swiss family ever spawned. Then one fine Sunday morning in August, I suddenly found the whole place overflowing. Chairs had been torn from all the ten bedrooms and borrowed from the neighbours; still many of the guests had to eat standing like Israelites at Passover or overflow on to the porch and the stairs and the broiling terrace. The first wave of mobilisation was upon us.

Orazio, the landlord, did not remove the black half-cigar from his lips, but he was busier and more feverish than ever in his days of horse-coping or contraband. The two maids fluttered about aimlessly like rabbits, the Swiss children applied themselves to amateur attendance with all the instincts of their race, but he contented himself with tucking up his shirt sleeves (always a demonstration of energy) and delivered voluble speeches in a strange mixture of Neapolitan and Provençal, that might be styled lingua- (villa-) franca if one dared jest on so serious a matter. The burthen of his discourse was that he was catering under cost price because Italians and French were brothers and would soon be brothers-in-arms. "*Doos franki ke mi coostay. Je ne vohlyo rien guadagnay. Tempo de pay, tray franki ke coostay le day-jonay, sons vinn. Ojoordwee, tempo de gwairr, soltanto doos franki avec vinn, toot comprayss. Vayday ke noo somm frahtell. Ot, nov, ditch million dom ke l'Italia mettra contro lay Toodesk.*" [1]

[1] "Two francs it cost me. I don't want to make anything. In time of peace lunch cost three francs without wine. To-day, in time of war,

There was a great deal of grumbling about the food, for supplies had been almost impossible to obtain, and many sought to refuse payment, but they had no chance against Orazio's torrents of gibberish. Moreover, the soldiers were all in the highest spirits.

I do not know when I have ever met such a crowd of good fellows. They were of all classes and from all parts of France, almost from all parts of the world; professional men, smart young sportsmen, labourers, counter-jumpers, hooligans, who had left everything at a moment's notice to answer their country's call. I enjoyed their society for many days, and was made the confidant of the most intimate details of their lives, from the loves they had left behind them to the fleas they had found in the straw at their quarters. One thing surprised me, for I had never found it outside Britain and Slav countries—they were all determined to pay for my refreshment. When I invited a group to drink to the Alliance, one of them would steal away and press coins into Orazio's hand behind my back.

At first there was perhaps too much carousing, due to the excitement of the times. Then the authorities interfered with a heavy hand. Pickets came round soon after supper to order all men off to their straw.

There were curfew regulations for the cafés at Nice, regulations, too, about the nature of our beverages. Absinthe was prohibited almost at once, and thirsty journalists made pilgrimages to Monte Carlo until the green, insipid drink was prohibited in the Principality also.

But a journey to Monte Carlo soon required a really passionate devotion for absinthe, and locomotion became almost impossible. Trams were suspended for weeks, the idea being that all the drivers and conductors had been mobilised; trains were only for troops; and the passport formalities were endless.

only two francs with wine and everything thrown in. You see we are brothers. Eight, nine, ten million men (d'hommes) will be put into the field by Italy against the Teutons."

First, all foreigners had to obtain permits of sojourn, and this meant waiting about in the little Mairie of Villefranche for hours amid a perspiring crowd. Then everybody, native and foreigner alike, had to obtain a permit of circulation for every journey, however short. You had to declare not only the time of your departure but the time of your return, which was hopeless guess-work. Eventually, you had to supply officially authenticated photographs to be glued on to your pass, but the original plan was to write out minute personal descriptions. This work was entrusted to one fat policeman at Villefranche.

He sat all day in a sort of cupboard and we had to form a long queue and face him in turn at a peep-hole. The descriptions were often surprising and never the same from day to day. They depended on the humour of the fat policeman, and I used to feel quite bashful when I stood up to him to be scrutinised. Sometimes I was represented as a young Adonis with round face, blue eyes, and " imposing brow," at other times as almost a fiend in human shape. We used to exchange jests on the subject.

One day, a timid little girl preceded me at the window and handed in a ragged bundle of papers.

" Humph! " said the policeman, adjusting his bone spectacles, " where do you want to go, my little friend? "

" Please, sir, to Beaulieu. It's about the washing. My mother . . ."

" Never mind about your mother."

He took down a printed form from a pigeon-hole, spread it out slowly in front of him, scratched his head, and moistened a pen with ink. He began to write roundly with many flourishes at a snail's pace. Then an expression of mild surprise stole across his face.

" Jean! " he muttered, " your name is not Jean."

The crowd began to giggle.

" There is nothing to laugh at," he went on. " This

document has been drawn up very carelessly. Your name cannot be Jean."

" No, sir, Jeanne."

" Why did you not say so at first? Now I have spoiled this form and must begin another one."

He was proceeding with his work in a leisurely way, when his eyes suddenly started out of his head.

" Name of a name! " he roared, " you are forty-three years of age! "

" No, sir, only twelve."

" Forty-three years of age, I find, and the father of eight children. Have you come here to mock me? "

At last he managed to elicit, what she had tried to explain at the outset, that her mother had sent her with her father's papers.

" Well," the policeman said grimly, " I can't help that now. I have written you down as Jeanne, and I have given your description—pink face, hair down your back, and so on—but I have also stated that you are forty-three years of age and the father of eight children. If you are arrested as a German spy on your way to Beaulieu, it is not my fault."

Another day, I had walked into Nice and was preparing to start back for Villefranche at about 6 p.m. when a friend said:

" Don't you know that all circulation on the country roads has now been prohibited after six? You will certainly be stopped and perhaps locked up. Luckily I can put you up at my flat, but we must first go to the town-hall and get a permit for you to stay the night at Nice."

I was grateful but determined to try to reach home, though he assured me I stood no earthly chance.

Trams were now running again in the town, and I took one as far as the square at the foot of the col or pass for Villefranche. In the tram, I heard a French officer asking the conductor the way to Villefranche, and I began to scent a way of salvation.

I leaped out as fast as I could after him and offered to show him the way.

That was very kind of me.

Not at all, I was going to Villefranche myself.

Excellent: in that case, we would walk together, if I did not mind. It was always a pleasure for him to talk to an Englishman.

The danger zone was the octroi at the top of the pass. It was there, if anywhere, that I should be stopped. I intended to say I was acting as guide to the officer, but I did not expect that would avail me much. As we approached the octroi, I saw two guards with rifles. They made a step or two towards us and I had a vision of a gloomy cell. I chattered away to the officer as I have never chattered before. The guards advanced a step or two towards us. I redoubled my chatter, I laughed, I seized the officer by the arm: at all costs I must display myself as his intimate friend. The guards saluted the officer. We walked on. I was saved.

When I reached my inn, an old trooper looked up from his cups in amazement.

" We all thought you had stayed in Nice," he observed, " as the roads are condemned and there are orders to arrest any civilian using them after six. How on earth did you manage to get through? "

" Oh! " I said, " I just requisitioned an officer."

In Italy there was plenty of vigilance but none of this fuss when war broke out. Nor were there wild spy-hunts as at nervous Nice.

Those spy-hunts had grave and gay sides.

A whisper would go round Vogade's and in a trice all would leave their tea-tables and rush helter-skelter to the door and join a pack of people in hot pursuit of an alleged spy. Sometimes they would wait for hours like hounds, nosing at a shop-door or a cellar-grating, where rumour had located their quarry.

All sorts of people would be suspected. A thick hotel-

keeper from Switzerland, with the compromising name of Weber and a yet more compromising accent, lived in a state of perpetual alarm though he had lived and thrived at Nice for many years. One day he offered to show the authorities one of his buildings, which was suitable for the Red Cross. Two gendarmes were sent to inspect and he walked through the streets between them for a distance of perhaps fifty yards. Within half an hour all Nice was convinced that Weber had been arrested as a spy. When he reappeared, there was a crowd waiting to lynch him. I am not sure that his hotel windows were not broken that night.

A man who said something rude about the French army outside a café in the Avenue de la Gare had his ear cut off with a sword-stick almost like the servant of the High Priest.

Talking German in public affected patriotic nerves.

I had some fun with an old friend one afternoon in the crowd which stood reading the war news outside the office of the *Eclaireur*.

"Do you know," he said to me with bated breath, "as I was going along just now, I overheard somebody say with a look at me, '*Tiens, en voilà un qui a bien l'air d'un Autrichien!*'[1] As though there were such a thing as a distinctive Austrian look!"

"What a joke!" I said.

"Joke! I tell you it's no laughing matter just now. One might be beaten to pieces."

"*Aber, mein lieber Herr!*" I roared at him.

But he grew as pale as a wall and fled like a hare. I do not know when I have ever seen a man disappear so quickly round a corner. And running was, of course, the most foolish thing he could have done. I told him afterwards that he must have been very wicked, as no man pursued.

[1] "I say, there's a chap who looks devilishly like an Austrian."

II. ON THE ROAD

April 1915

It was in April 1915 that I resolved to revisit Italy. First, then, to Nice for credentials. The Foreign Office had been trying to make money, à la Aladdin, by announcing that old passports must be made new. But three ladies were conducting an exuberant conversation with the clerk at the Consulate, four more waited their turn, and I was in a hurry. So I went to the town hall, jesting to myself about little Mairie, found three soldiers smoking cigarettes at the receipt of custom, and received an *exeat regno* without a murmur, as easily as though I had been a spy or a defaulting conscript.

Ex-topers of my acquaintance, abandoning alcohol *quamdiu se bene gesserint* (*i.e.* so long as they did not have to go to war), extolled the blessedness of reduced "impedimenta"—and alcohol is certainly sometimes an impediment to speech.

In the same spirit I set forth intending to go from Monte Carlo to Montenegro afoot. First I proposed advance luggage with all the worry of railway formalities, then German knapsacks like the burthen of Christian on his progress. Finally, happy thought! I decided to take only what my pockets could contain. This inspiration came to me from an American nomad, whom I whilom met.

"Where's your baggage?" I asked him in his vernacular.

"I guess I never have any, not even a grip-sack."

"Then, how do you do?"

"Quite well, thank you. I just buy stuff as I go along."

"But clothes, dress clothes, brushes, boots?"

"I calculate there are always stores, and my figure ain't abnormal."

I set out with two volumes—a German officer's revelations of cheating at Monte Carlo (*experto crede !*) and an Italian treatise on the criminology of love—materials for a romance I may write after the war. To these I have had to add in the process of days: item, a pair of nail scissors, which I have taught to clean shave; item, a comb, that shall be thrown away when the weather permits of head-cropping; item, soap, for which there should surely be some substitute. At each stage I buy salt, which is the prime tooth-powder and prophylactic. I began by buying shirts and collars and handkerchiefs, but I soon found it good exercise to do my own laundry work, though that leaves me dependent on the kind offices of the morning sun. Pyjamas, I find, are a garment of supererogation. Indeed, there is joy in sleeping stark.

I walked dustily to Monte Carlo, recalling Dante on the whirlwind: "*Dinanzi polveroso va superbo*" (dusty to vanward, on he goes superb). Train to Ventimiglia—Italy, hurrah! And no need for a luggageless man to worry about customs. Walked to Bordighera: sordid houses all the way, tiny electric trams, mediæval diligences with heaps of empty baskets on the roof, and dense crowds of perspiring peasants inside. Bordighera has grown but not grown up since I dwelled there some forty years ago. To the same palm trees add a dapper casino at the promontory, a bright sea promenade with shaky seats, and there you are. In the main street I was shocked by two brutes openly talking German: that is the worst of coming to a neutral state.

San Remo. Faugh! the civilised tourist place with hordes of porters at the station. Roamed far, footsore, in vain search of a truly native inn, but had to put up with a commercial house by the sea. Asking for a room, I tendered a five-lire note and proposed prepayment in view of the absence of luggage. The landlord said it did not matter and I must not derange myself, so I made a

motion of taking back the money, but he held on to it. He showed me a huge case of splendid carnations, which he had bought at 2½d. the hundred, and told me a daily flower-train starts for Italy from this garden of the coast, supplying the chief towns of the north. Casino entertainment: a big band, wire dancers, Japanese gymnasts, and various songs, all stupid save one, which improvised personalities about members of the audience. Roulette and baccarat are constantly being tolerated and suppressed in Italian casinos. Now they had just been suspended till next December,—who knows—till after the war?

An hour's difference in the national time gave a foretaste of daylight-saving, so when I rose at five the clocks struck six. On leaving San Remo, I was chaffed by half-a-dozen maidens at work in a field of carnations; they informed me that I was sympathetic and that they were pretty girls. Two too obvious facts. Further on, a plain young woman sat by the road and stared and sang something about *amore* as I passed. How completely the atmosphere changes when you cross a frontier !

Further on, I saw a pot-house sign: *Farmacia per i sani* (the healthy men's chemist) and a picture of bottles and glasses; also a place of refreshment with a sort of ticket window by the roadside, and all the windows barricaded,—an unusual precaution for a public house.

The endlessness of certain bits of road reminded me of the deceitfulness of life: on and on you plod towards a promontory, only to find fresh inlets delaying your vision of the next bright bay. Then there were milestones so worn with age that they told no tale. Inland were strange Saracen villages, natural fortresses, purple hills, and distant peaks of snow.

Lay at Porto Maurizio, rather a dreary, precipitous town. Albergo Commercio, an old posting-house with a courtyard, apparently run by one man-of-all-work, who won my heart by setting down my age at thirty in the

register. Thirty in the shade? Slow dinner: an enormous bowl of meat soup with macaroni and many vegetables, fresh sardines, veal cutlet and fried potatoes, fruit and rough red wine. Price 2s. 2d. The war bread (*pane unico*) of this neutral country was brownish but not bitter. At nightfall a few groups of girls paraded the streets. One called out, "*Viva la guerra!*" Another corrected her with "*Viva la pace!*" But feeling did not run high.

Through pines and olives over a steep hill to Diano Marina, which is preceded by a good white tennis court marked, "Property of Pension Suisse." When I last came here, Diano Marina was a village freshly ruined by earthquake. Now it is a sort of Bognor out of season, all pink and white and modern. Everybody is so polite in Liguria that I was amazed when a brown youth joined my table after lunch, called me a German spy, and hoped I should have paralysis—quite a serious Italian curse. After I had had him removed, the landlady said, "You must have patience with him. He is a poor unfortunate lunatic and quite harmless when he is sober."

"Why do you give him drink?"

She shrugged her shoulders and repeated that one must have patience with the unfortunate. Besides, he insisted on drinking. He would eke steal in order to obtain drink. They are very indulgent, good-natured people hereabouts, especially towards drunkards and lunatics and me. A large proportion of those born during the earthquake grew up more or less imbecile.

At Cervo I saw a black notice on an electric installation: a skull and crossbones and the warning, "Whoso touches these wires dies" (*Chi tocca ai fili muore*). This quaint alarm is imitated by Italian chemists, who stick skulls and crossbones over the mildest poisons, permanganate of potash, for instance.

Gladly leaving Alassio, the last and greediest of the tourist resorts, I found myself well out of the beaten track at Albenga, chiefly famed for fevers. The old

Albergo Commercio has long balconies outside the bedroom doors. I was scarcely installed before I received my bill (one-and-sixpence for the night). No luggage, no confidence. Breakfast cost fourpence. Albenga played a big part in Guelph and Ghibelline history and retains an air of mystery in her narrow old streets. Cinema shows periodically disgorged young crowds into the shadows.

There were few people on the high road save soldiers in the new grey-green uniform. Lunching at Loano in a rough trattoria, I conversed with young men who hoped there would be no war. They seemed more interested in a process for staining white flowers blue by soaking the stalks in chemicals. In the church I read a denunciation of bare-necked women: they were warned that such indecency would be visited with excommunication. On a rock beyond Borgio-Verezzi stand two very odd houses: one with the dome of a mosque and strange slices of masonry succeeding one another at the back, the other painted violently red and yellow, like a clown's costume. All the windows were blocked up with brown oriental shutters. Two ladies in bright orange-marmalade blouses fluttered on a parapet. What a scene for a romance!

At Finalmarina, a modest watering-place, a monk was preaching in the church, but made no allusion to war. The congregation was nearly all female, and those who did not habitually wear hats had donned black lace scarves for the satisfaction of Saint Paul. Others had merely laid handkerchiefs over their heads.

Went to the Albergo del Giardino, but an elderly woman curtly said "No" when I asked for a room. Perhaps she thought I looked too much like a tramp. The Hotel Garibaldi seemed to have no door. So I decided to leave this inhospitable spot and pushed on to the ancient Republic of Noli . . . Noli of the seventy-two towers . . . Noli, born before Rome.

Noli is one of the many places in which I should like to

live. Only I should never dare to face a cat again when I went away.

During the best months of the year all Noli catches anchovies all night and cures them all day. The brown maidens who grub in tubs are very goodly with their bright black hair and glad gipsy eyes. But the essence of anchovy is omnipresent, all-pervading, infects your innermost clothing, filters into every pore, defies the starkest soaps and unguents. When I reached Spotorno the whole feline population haunted me with one consent.

Noli remained a sovereign republic for centuries, waged her own wars, had her own bishopric (hence the phrase *Noli episcopari*). The seventy-two nobles were privileged to erect seventy-two big, fat, red towers on condition that they maintained seventy-two galleys to fight the Carthaginians and convoy Crusaders.

Every nook in the labyrinth of narrow streets affords another joyful surprise. What wouldn't Rembrandt have given to behold the treacly tints of time on the primeval houses? Nobly primeval is Noli, far above mere middle ages. Oh! the carved pillars and coats of arms, the gates and bastions and crenellated walls, the wan frescoes, the sweet faces at forbidding windows, the terraces with dense pergolas of vines; and oho! the tumult of giant geraniums—surely the most luxuriant geraniums outside Mars—of every happy tint, from the salmon of a Scots dawn to the regalia of murex and mulberry.

Adopting the methods of a certain traveller to Barcelona, I should chronicle the whole population of Noli as mad or drunk. In truth the afflicted of God are nearly all twenty-eight years old, being born in the year of earthquake. A crutched fool haunts the inn's verandah and asks all for matches at short intervals. Then he sits apart and nods with the eloquence of Burleigh as he buttons and unbuttons coat and waistcoat by the hour. Another provokes a small riot, then starts at a run up the hill, followed by half the population to prevent him from casting himself

into the sea again. Presently he is led back and plied with soda-water to cool his head.

Imagine all the experience I might garner from my balcony at this inn, where, for some forty pence a day, I can enjoy three full meals, two emptied bottles, a spacious apartment, and one of the greenest views in Europe.

But, on reflection, I feel I prefer to end my days at Spotorno, some three miles on. I lingered there at least four months. Chiefly, perhaps, because I bicycled down this coast eighteen years ago on my honeymoon and have never forgotten the wonderful John Dory, straight from sea to grill, provided by this smiling village.

To the natural beauties of Noli, Spotorno adds fragrance and cleanliness and comfort. A big Palace Hotel has arisen, and there are dapper villas for summer bathers. Narrow—four-foot—lanes run at intervals between high white houses from the fashionable front to the primitive village. There is something Oriental about the scene, especially at dusk, when brown maidens cluster at the corners to quiz and gossip, then to stroll in the moonlight arm-in-arm. Oriental, too, are their twanging, strident voices, especially when they break forth into monotonous and melancholy songs that must have come straight down from the Moors.

The carts have a special grace, rolling and sobbing with age on their two high wheels, surmounted by hoops for holding hoods against sun or rain. A lamp swings like a will-o'-the-wisp beneath the shafts. The driver is always curled up in deep sleep, trusting the wise mules to go and stop aright. There are few sights prettier than the twinkle of these carts along a distant road, unless it be the fireflies skimming the shore, or a hundred boat-lights glittering on the horizon as they commune with the stars.

The first of May is labour's hey-day, so strict a festival that we are doomed to stale bread. Every inn puts out a new fir-tree as the year's bush for its good Noli wine.

During the night, gay sparks celebrated Flora by breaking electric globes, tying up door-handles with wire, casting benches into the street, and making hay of the Syndic's garden. But they will not be punished, for their fathers vote at local elections.

The second of May is the Feast of the Madonna of the Annunciation, Spotorno's great annual holiday. There are little booths with nuts strung as rosaries, cakes, ribbons, ruthless roulettes, and our old friend the three-card trick. Most of the afternoon is spent in waiting for the procession.

Last year (1914) the barber's little boy created a great sensation by dressing up, or rather undressing, as a Christian martyr. Save for a sheepskin round his loins, an enormous beard and wig, and blood painted on his arm, he was nude.

This year he represents Christ with a fine golden wig. His hands are tied with a piece of rope and he is held sternly by three small boys in red and white turbans, vaguely reminiscent of peppermint rock. They look very fierce and grown up, like savage dwarfs, with their waxed moustachios and pointed beards. A small girl plays the difficult part of Saint Veronica with skill and patience, walking backwards and holding out the holy handkerchief for miles.

All the prettiest children in the village must have taken part in the procession. The Madonna is a darling with her crown and downcast eyes and open book, attended by a small angel who has to hold a finger uplifted all the way. And little Saint Cecilia looks very handsome with her flowing black hair and harp and many heavy gold rings as she marches in front of the band. Saint Francis, with shaven head and a fillet of hair, is quite the pocket saint. Saint George, with flag and flashing sword, has a hobble that provokes the smiles of the crowd.

The gilded group of the Annunciation is evidently very heavy, for it is borne with difficulty by eight men in white

coats, and they are changed at frequent intervals. The huge crucifixes, too, are hard to hold steadily. The crowd uncovers, but indulges in a good deal of chaff. This is not meant for irreverence and I have noticed similar good humour at Ligurian funerals.

Another place where I would live is the Island of Bergeggi, some twenty minutes' row from Spotorno, for it reminds me of Saint Michael's Mount on a small scale. The owner has the appropriate name of Avvocato Millelire (Lawyer Thousandfrancs)—as one might say, Mr. Sixand-eightpence of Finsbury Pavement. I am not joking: it is his real name—and he was willing to sell the island for one thousand francs or even less a few years ago. It is as green as Erin and violently fragrant now with clouds of honeysuckle. There are ruins of a Roman tower and of a mediæval monastery, a grotto, a holy well, a pair of hawks. When it is my own green isle I mean to colonise it with rabbits and guinea pigs and live on the guineas of their loves.

The coast opposite is fretted with caves. One of them, a favourite place for picnics and flirtations, might be pantomime scenery, with papier mâché rocks and the natural statue of a recumbent empress.

Still more wonderful is an absolutely black antre close by, formed out of coal-like rock, against which some bright red sea-anemones are very effective at the entrance. You can row in only a little way as the roof soon becomes very low. A sculptor and a countess have swum in four hundred yards to a small beach, but there is a risk of being clutched by devil-fish on the way.

Further along the road I climbed to the village of Bergeggi, which is set upon a steep hill, and here I had my first brush with the Italian police.

Near the church I was accosted by a man who asked, " What seek ye? "

" Wine," said I, for I thirsted.

He pretended not to know where wine was, so I talked

roundly to him and continued my exploration towards the Fort of Saint Catherine.

On my way down, I overheard some servants at the window of a big villa saying something about an Austrian.

At last, on the terrace of the village inn, I joined some soldiers and called lustily for wine. But I was scarcely seated when two carbineers came up a path from the inn's bush below.

"*Buon giorno, signori!*"

They replied politely and strolled up to my table. One with a gun on his back asked whence I came.

"Perhaps you would like to see my papers?"

While I fumbled, Signor de Mari, Marquis and Village Mayor, arrived from the big suspicious villa, and I felt myself surrounded.

He looked at my local passport and asked in German whether I could really have the age recorded against me. The irony that youthfulness, begotten of a well-spent life, should have raised mistrust of me—even hunnified my John Bullish countenance! However, his Worship was soon convinced.

Yes, but one of the carbineers was not. Did I speak English? he asked.

Of course—my mother-tongue.

Then, pray, how was it that I did not answer in English when the Mayor addressed me in English? I explained that he had spoken in German, to my great discontent. The Mayor laughed and passed final judgment: "He *is* English." Then came pretty excuses and apologies, and a carbineer declared we were brothers.

All the while, I had seized every moment's respite to clamour for wine, but the landlady was far too much excited to heed me. I scolded her afterwards, reminding her that, even if I had been a spy, the Bible bade her give an enemy to drink.

III. PERSONS OF THE CRISIS

May 1915

To explain the drama of May, which plunged Italy into the great war, I crave patience for a few pages of descriptive biography.

Hero:	D'ANNUNZIO, Gabriele, novelist, poet, demagogue, now aviator.
Chorus:	SALANDRA, Antonio, Prime Minister SONNINO, Sidney, Foreign Secretary } in the background.
Villain:	GIOLITTI.
Good Fairy:	His Majesty THE KING.
Bad Fairy:	Prince BUELOW, German Ambassador.

When Antonio SALANDRA became Prime Minister in April 1914, he was sixty years of age; a new man in Italian politics though he had been an under-secretary two or three times; almost unknown to the public. If the Chamber had known him better, it would have thrown him out at once.

For the parliamentary government of Italy did not depend on principles or even parties, but on a machine (then dominated by Giolitti), a sort of limited liability company, wherein all Giolittists were shareholders. Parties existed under the command of individuals, who hired out their followers, much as countries lend armies to one another. When Fortis and Sonnino and Luzzati became premiers, none of them could count ten personal followers. And the machine was very jealous of commanding personalities. Sonnino's administration lasted only three months; Fortis's six; Luzzati's a little longer owing to his personal popularity. Salandra was chosen for his lack of personality, as many popes have been, and little heed was taken of the freedom with which he had expressed his preference for principles to parties.

At an English school, he would probably have been known as " Tubby." He is as far removed as possible from one's idea of a leader of men. He is quiet and plump and amiable, far more in his element taking a Sunday walk with his family than swaying senates or defying empires. There is nothing in the least dramatic about him. Not his the eagle eye or the finger of scorn or the torrential peroration. He is the kind of man you want to sketch with a pair of compasses—all in circles—and then look to see if he is wagging his curly tail.

There are no anecdotes or legends about him. The nearest approach to one is that, when he was a boy, he took part in a discussion on a school-theme, and his master said, " You, Salandra, have the stuff of a politician, for you say what you want to say and you make us understand what you do not wish to express."

His family were landowners in Apulia and he has practical experience of agriculture. From a schoolboy he became a professor, from a professor a deputy and a minister—all without effort. His simple, natural career resembles his character. I do not suppose he ever had an adventure in his life. He has never run towards a goal: he has just reached it as a matter of course. Judging by his writings and speeches, he has not changed or developed his views during the last forty years. One of his admirers says he was born mature. It is scarcely possible to imagine a safer man for a great crisis.

Except perhaps Sidney SONNINO, who runs Joffre and Kitchener and Bratianu close for the title of Taciturn.

He was born at Pisa at 10 p.m. on the 11th of March 1847. His father, Baron Isaac Saul Sonnino (who described himself as a Protestant), was a successful financier at Alexandria until the fall of Mehemet Ali, when he settled at Leghorn among other " Protestants " named Isaac and Saul, who have a large colony there. Sidney's mother was English (maiden name, Tery) and he speaks English like a native of Maida Vale.

He was very studious at Pisa University, eschewing all games and fun at a rather riotous period, and having accordingly few friends. He took a legal degree with unusual speed and entered an office to prepare for a legal career; but in the first case submitted to him he decided that his client was quite in the wrong. The legal profession did not appear to him honest, so he decided to devote himself to—diplomacy!

From 1867 to 1873 he was attaché at Madrid, Vienna, and Berlin; then he was appointed to Petrograd, but decided that was too far away, and resigned.

Then he prepared himself laboriously for a political career, at that time considered a lawyer's preserve. In 1876 there were difficulties in Sicily and talk of coercionist legislation. He and a friend travelled all over the distressful island on mule-back to inquire and examine "in the English way," as he put it, whereby he doubtless meant thoroughly. They returned to Florence and shut themselves up for weeks, then brought forth a book in two volumes, full of facts and arguments. The book is said to have been much feared, but little read.

He helped to found a sort of *Saturday Review*, but it was too learned to pay and had at last to be stopped. His group continued their campaign with a daily.

On May 26, 1880, he entered Parliament, where he was the first to advocate universal suffrage. He used no rhetoric, but his speeches were full of facts and figures.

He was under-secretary to the Treasury, under Crispi, from August 7, 1887, to March 9, 1889; and Finance Minister in Crispi's administrations from December 15, 1893, to March 5, 1896, with Salandra as his under-secretary.

He had his own party, of which he said, "It is like an hotel. Anybody can come in and go away. The only thing expected is to sign the register when you arrive and give twenty-four hours' notice of departure."

He was Premier from February 8, 1906, to May 27,

1906, and from December 11, 1909, to March 31, 1910 (108 and 110 days respectively).

He is a diligent student and has a big library at Rome, full of books and step-ladders, occupying two floors in his palace.

Buelow complained that, out of 36,000,000 chattering Italians, it should be just this one taciturn person who fell to his lot.

Gabriele D'ANNUNZIO is an excellent foil to the two sober men who have enabled Italy to profit by his theatrical demonstrations of May 1915. The name may be a pen-name, modestly appropriated from an archangel —Gabriel of the Annunciation—or can be translated as Gabriel of the Advertisement. He began his career as a novelist, and had a vogue with romances that are full of blood and thunder and, to my demure judgment, seem tedious. Himself has said that he is better at poetry than prose. His poems are obscure and high-flown, modelled probably on Carducci's without attaining to Carducci's sonorous impressiveness. At the same time he is a magician of words—what a burgher once called a "lord of language." His phrases are carefully chosen, sometimes almost beautiful, for he is fond of borrowing from the Scriptures. Here are a few verses from a parody of the Psalms, that he published in November 1915:

"Now the arm of Rome was raised: the right hand of Rome was lifted to shake and to shatter.

"But we beheld our signs no more: there was no prophet among us, nor any that knew how long. . . .

"The bombs rumble over Monte Nero: the guns thunder over Piedmont. . . .

"The dead, oh, Italy: thy dead . . .

"Then was heard from on high a voice without flesh which said, 'Blessed are the dead!': a voice made itself felt, announcing, 'Blessed are those that die for thee!' . . .

" The dead shall have a new song: and the desert shall be sanctified."

He had an unsuccessful parliamentary career, probably because he was too independent and attached himself to no group. Then he went into voluntary exile in France, disgusted by the assiduities of creditors.

All of a sudden, at the age of fifty-three, he returned to clamour for war against Austria, and he was received as an emancipator. I have never been able to discern how the boom was engineered, or by whom. Outwardly, it seemed spontaneous, but surely that is impossible nowadays.

He reached Genoa on the afternoon of May 4, 1915, for the Garibaldian commemoration at Quarto. There was a certain preliminary excitement among journalists, who asked each other whether it would be worth while going to meet him at Asti. But Genoa went on with its work unmoved. Then he appeared suddenly in a train full of noisy students, and it was difficult to extricate him from the station. Some one related how he had found the poet at Asti, alone in a carriage full of flowers, that had been presented to him by ladies and students at Turin station. He had said his speech was already written and needed the addition of only two words: " absent " and " present."

There was a great deal of confusion at the demonstration on the 5th of May. No platform had been prepared. He had to speak from the base of a monument amid the tumult of ships' syrens, shifting crowds, bands, aeroplanes. He speaks clearly, but is a tiny little man with a tiny little voice. No one heard him, but his speech appeared in every newspaper that evening and made a sensation.

On the 6th of May he sat at lunch with several friends. There were thousands of telegrams on the table. One friend opened them, another classified them. Then d'Annunzio brushed them aside, saying, " After lunch." " Do

you remember?" he added, "I telegraphed from Paris in January, 'I will return only for the war.' Now I have returned and there will be war."

He had made up his mind to go to Milan on the 7th and thence to the Abruzzi to see his mother. But his mother waited for him in vain. An American agent insisted about some articles, and he replied, "Articles be hanged! Now I can only make speeches." And the public insisted that he should go on making speeches at Genoa, where he might have remained for weeks if he had not been bombarded with letters, telegrams, telephone messages, all clamouring, "Come to Rome."

For a long time he pleaded his engagements at Genoa —speeches, deputations, manifestoes . . .

On the 9th of May, GIOLITTI returned to Rome to prevent war. His exile, like that of d'Annunzio, had been voluntary, though prompted by different reasons. He was sure that, with his great reputation and parliamentary majority, he had only to appear in order to be obeyed. To his surprise, he was received by an angry mob, yelling, "Down with Buelow's flunkey!" As he drove home with a contemptuous smile, guarded by carbineers, a youth threw some half-pence into his carriage, symbols of sordid corruption. But apparently he could afford to smile. Sufficient Giolittist deputies rallied round him to make peace certain, when Parliament should meet on the 20th.

Then, however, the voice of the country made itself heard with no uncertain sound.

The Italian in the street, the tub-thumper in the *trattoria*, the village Garibaldi, the mute inglorious Dante, Caius, Titus, and Sempronius (anglicé Tom, Dick, and Harry), are now very, very angry. They walk about in bands, rush, gesticulate, shout: "Down with Giolitti! Into the river with Giolitti! Death to the traitor!" They burn the *Stampa*, Giolitti's paper, in the public squares. But none can give satisfactory reasons for their heat.

All confess that Giolitti is the only Italian statesman,

so clever that he always contrives to have his own way, so strong that none can resist him, so unscrupulous that he tricks everybody. Dishonest, too, for he had to flee the country over that Bank of Rome affair some years ago. Probably in the pay of the Germans. Buelow's cat's-paw, but now tricking Buelow as he tricked everybody else; hated by the whole country, yet always able to command a majority in the Chamber; he extended the franchise to win the Socialists and then betrayed them shamefully, but they still vote for him. Just as powerful in retirement as in office, he has only to appear in Parliament to bring every one to heel. He appointed Salandra as his successor and warming-pan, promising not to overthrow him. He repeated this promise only yesterday, but to-day Salandra has to go. What a wicked traitor! He has prevented Italy from seizing her one great opportunity of rehabilitation, and joining the world against the Huns. Yet now, he is capable of conducting the war against Austria himself, perhaps just as parsimoniously as he conducted that unfortunate Libyan campaign. Such are some of the wildly contradictory cries.

Titus and Sempronius are difficult to cross-examine. They take refuge in abuse. As an impartial observer, I am reminded of the sort of abuse which was levelled at men like Gladstone and Chamberlain during their lives, only to be followed by the erection of statues. No doubt Giolitti will have his statue after he has been thrown into the river. But is he a great man? Everybody answers "No!" with indignation. Successful, yes. He is a Knight of the Annunciation (the Italian Garter), which makes him rank as cousin to the King—they write "My dear Cousin" to each other. Powerful, yes. But not even strong. His policy has always been that of the small huckster, his arts have been those of the pettifogging attorney. He is not even a good speaker in a land where all are orators. He has no strength of character. It is all too bewildering.

Men discussed the war in a detached way. Like Disraeli's gipsy, who was asked whether nature was stronger than education, they thought there was a great deal to be said on both sides. Germany was certainly very strong. No one could deny that. Germany had done a great deal for Italian commerce. Yes, Belgium was a bad business, but Italy was too young to trouble about philanthropy far away. She had to think about her own development. She might still obtain what she wanted from Austria by diplomacy. That was the sort of talk, interrogative rather than dogmatic.

Then came a sudden change. I had spent the afternoon at Savona and had seen the latest telegrams in a coffee-house. Was there any news? I was asked carelessly after dinner at Spotorno. Yes, the King and ministry had revoked their intention of attending the great Garibaldian celebration at Quarto near Genoa. Ah! that was news indeed. That was something Italian. That was nearer the bone than all these marches and countermarches in Flanders or Bukovina. The decision was discussed loudly and hotly far into the night. Next day, the patriotic papers were full of denunciations of Giolitti's treacherous conspiracy.

"*Quest' ora tragica!* This solemn, tragic hour!" These are the continuous refrains of every coffee-house conversation. But what is the tragedy? Why, Salandra's resignation, of course. Oh! that traitor Giolitti, that *mascalzone*, that *farabutto*, that blackguard. Will no one have the pluck to use a revolver or a stiletto and rid Italy of the dictator? It all sounds sadly impotent in spite of the violence of the declamation. Either war or revolution, that is the universal cry. But if all are unanimous and Giolitti is the only obstacle, why not put your heads together and turn him out? Oh! we can't. There is the tragedy of the hour.

Let me give a snap-shot of Giolitti. A fat, sleek face, with a big thick moustache, protruding under-lip, and

beak-like nose. Perhaps the youngest septuagenarian ever seen. He might be a Jew by his features, and the name might be a corruption of Joel, but all agree that this is not so. He is very neat, dapper, polite, plausible, ingratiating. Nothing ruffles him, the born diplomat. With all his cleverness, what a fool to arouse all this hatred! What great things he might yet accomplish if only he could be trusted!

As a matter of fact, Giolitti is neither so silly nor so wicked as his countrymen now suppose. He is probably no better and no worse than the average party politician. He made Salandra his warming-pan because the times were clearly unripe for glory or even personal profit. The times are now riper, and Salandra has been showing too much independence. So Giolitti returned to Rome to lay a hand upon the reins. The extreme war-party's idea that Buelow sent for him to upset the ministry is absurd. If he had wanted to stop the war, he would not have waited till millions had been spent on preparations, till the army had been sent to the frontier, till the nation was spoiling for a fight. His is not the sort of courage which affronts street-rows. He must hate to be shut up in his house, requiring as many guards as Buelow himself.

The story goes that, when the crisis came, Giolitti asked Salandra to guarantee his safety while attending to his parliamentary duties. "Have no fear," was the reply; "I have ordered troops to escort you to the House. But of course you will have to look after yourself when you come away."

No, if there has been any treachery, Salandra is the traitor—the patriotic traitor. A well-trained lieutenant would have handed over the reins at once to his chief. Salandra preferred to play his own game, which is also the country's. He said: "All right! Take the reins, if you can. I am off." And, as he foresaw, his resignation raised a huge storm against his old master, a wild wave of enthusiasm in favour of war: after many long hesita-

tions, Italy made up her mind. Barring accidents, war is now inevitable. Salandra's position is immensely strengthened by the success of a gambit such as Italian chess-players love. Whether he will have the conduct of the war remains to be seen. Many talk of a coalition of all the talents, such as met the emergency in France last year.

To keep Giolitti out of such a government would be difficult. He is very unpopular just now, especially with newspapers and coffee-houses. But if there were election by popularity, the lot would certainly fall on d'Annunzio. Which is absurd. Moreover, Giolitti is, by all consent, the only statesman. And he has a solid, well-drilled majority. Who knows whether a general election would diminish it?

On the 11th of May, d'Annunzio was induced to telegraph to his friends, " I will be at Rome to-morrow evening." There was much the same mild anticipatory flutter as at Genoa. Four journalists, debating his reception, feared they might be derided as " four cats," the Italian equivalent of three tailors. They went to give the news to the evening papers. They had handbills distributed in the Corso, inviting citizens to the station for the arrival of " the poet." Steps were taken to secure the attendance of Barzilai, M.P. for Rome, President of the Press Association.

D'Annunzio was due at seven. The faithful four came to the station at six and were told no platform tickets would be issued. One of them tried to take a ticket for Frascati, but was warned he would be escorted to the train. There were discussions with the police: Was it a crime to come to meet Gabriele d'Annunzio? No, but there were orders to prevent a demonstration. Then the crowd invaded the station. It seemed impossible for the poet to leave the train. At last he climbed out of the other side and left the station by the departure platform. But the crowds were all round the station and for a long time

his motor could not move. Somehow, he contrived to reach the Hotel Regina, where thousands clamoured for him to show himself and speak. The landlord brought a carpet and two candles on to the balcony, forming an illuminated platform, almost an altar. The poet spoke, almost moderately, of patriotism.

On the 13th of May, Salandra resigned office. D'Annunzio reappeared on his balcony and delivered what he calls his "Harangue to the Roman People in Tumult":

"If it be deemed a crime to invite citizens to violence, I boast of that crime, I take full responsibility for it. . . . Treason is being accomplished at Rome, in the city of the soul, in the city of life. In our Rome, they are seeking to strangle the fatherland with a Prussian rope. This murder is being accomplished at Rome. Listen to me. We are about to be sold like a vile flock. There is the threat of a servile stain upon the dignity of every one of us, upon the forehead of every one of us, upon yours and mine, upon the foreheads of your sons and of your children yet unborn. The name of Italian will be a name to blush for, to make us hide ourselves in shame, to scorch the lips which utter it."

The words went round: "War or Revolution!" Insurrectionary committees were formed. There were preparations for a barricade in the via Viminale. Students assembled on the 14th, asked for and obtained the university flag (*bandiera dell' Ateneo*), and marched on Parliament; they invaded the outer hall, would have invaded the Chamber itself if a couple of interventionist deputies had not persuaded them to go away.

That evening, d'Annunzio harangued at the Costanzi Theatre:

"We are met here to try the crime of high treason, to denounce the criminal, the criminals, to the contempt and vengeance of good citizens. Listen. The chief of the malefactors, whose soul is but a cold lie furnished with

subtle craftiness as the bag of the devil-fish is furnished with insidious tentacles . . . has betrayed his king, has betrayed his country. He is serving the foreigner against his sovereign and his fatherland. That is what we must prove to the nation, imprint upon the conscience of the people. Listen. Listen. The fatherland is in danger. The fatherland is on the road to destruction. In order to save Italy from irreparable ruin and ignominy, it is the duty of every one of us to devote himself utterly, to arm himself with every weapon. Every good citizen must be a soldier against the enemy within our borders; every good citizen must fight without respite or quarter. The same blood must flow, the same hallowed blood which is shed in the trenches. The Italian Parliament will reopen on the 20th of May. It is the anniversary of Garibaldi's prodigious march, his march on the Park of Palermo. Let us celebrate that anniversary by closing the doors of Parliament to the flunkies of Villa Malta [1] and driving them back to the arms of their ignoble master. Then, in the Italian Parliament, free men, liberated from hideous promiscuities, will proclaim the liberty and completion of the fatherland."

Here is a side-light on the temper of the hour. "I thought I was in France during the Terror," a certain princess relates. "My palace was suddenly invaded by the wildest roughs. It is true that they proved to be merely orators who wanted to make use of my balcony, but for the moment it seemed as though Rome were in the hands of the mob."

It was THE KING who saved the situation. He had only to accept Salandra's resignation and send for Giolitti, who possessed a parliamentary majority. That would have been perfectly constitutional action. The army would soon have suppressed the mob; d'Annunzio would doubtless have been shot; Italy would have remained neutral. But his Majesty preferred to interpret the national senti-

[1] Buelow's house.

ment. With amazing tact he contrived to reconcile constitutional action and a peaceful revolution.

And now for the protagonist of Italian trouble, the bad fairy, the arch-spy.

Prince, Chancellor, Ambassador, smiling corruptor of the Roman aristocracy and deputies, BUELOW began his career as a spy.

Bismarck used to send daily reports to the Emperor William I. Bismarck's wife used to copy them out and give them to his private secretary, who paid her a regular wage.[1] This private secretary was Buelow.[2]

The very man to send to Rome to try to bring Italy within the Teuton orbit and make her a vassal State like Turkey.

He was insolently frank about it all. There was scarcely any pretence of behaving like an ordinary ambassador. To court Italy's neutrality he did not trouble to make clear, firm offers on behalf of his Government. For one thing, he knew very well that he had no acceptable offers to make.

No, his job was extra-official; he set himself to embarrass the government, to which he was accredited, to impede the development of Italy's legitimate interests. Intrigue was the key-note of his embassage—the heaviest of intrigue. He was nicknamed the 420 gun of diplomacy.

His chief instruments were minor deputies and senators, the failures of politics, literature, and science, venal journalists, and effete members of the aristocracy, the *austriacante* aristocracy of 1859, who had espoused Teuton wives and Teuton thoughts and the Teuton cause. To these were added a few members of the Court and some foreign or semi-foreign clericals. With their help he hoped to embroil Italy with the civilised belligerents, and he succeeded in carrying on the most artistic espionage.

For this pretty game he possessed an ideal partner in

[1] Paul Lanoir, *L'Espionnage allemand en France.*
[2] Ezio M. Gray, *L'Invasione tedesca in Italia.*

his wife, a daughter of the famous Italian statesman Minghetti. Her brother, a senator, was little more than her husband's agent. " I am the most German of the Italians," she used to say, with a proud smile. And in an album presented to Wilbrandt, a German author, on his seventieth birthday, she actually wrote: " After Richard Wagner, Wilbrandt is the man to whom I am most grateful; for I owe it to him that I became German in thought and feeling."

It is easy to guess what a corrupting influence could be exercised by the gay salon of this mental renegade at Villa Malta. All sorts of *schwärmerisch* (sloppy) Italians were attracted by the *Kultur* (footle) of Wagner or Hegel; snobs welcomed their one opportunity of clattering their tea-cups with those of degenerate nobles; half burgherdom hurried to help knit mittens or comforters for the devastators of Belgium; it was a Tiddler's ground of gossip for the social, political, and military half-world of modern Rome. And the feline ambassador would tread delicately through the cigarette smoke imbibing news that should presently be sifted and tabulated at Berlin.

We can picture the pricked ears of the two Buelows during this sort of chatter, which may be taken as typical:—

The Second Grenadiers have already gone. I can assure you that they are to embark at Capodistria. There is still a great shortage of camp-kitchens. I know it as a fact that He said, " Never against Russia! " It appears that they are calling up the 1888 class. Sonnino told me himself this very morning. . . . Perhaps I ought not to mention this, but everybody will know all about it in a few days. England has promised eight cruisers.

It is not difficult to guess that the Sultan of Germany was kept pretty well informed of Italian intentions and preparations.

It is related that, when an inquisitive lady put a leading question to Salandra, he replied with a laugh, " You had

better go and ask Prince Buelow: he is far better informed than I am." On a similar occasion, Disraeli said to her, "Oh! you dear."

Here is a typical incident, serving to illustrate the impudence and thoroughness of Buelow's methods: Signor Albertini, editor of the *Corriere della Sera* and a staunch advocate of Italian intervention, was nominated senator. Buelow's brother-in-law, Di Camporeale, rushed into the office of one of the leading ministers and exclaimed to him: " Take care what you are doing. If you nominate Albertini for a senatorship I should not be surprised to hear that the German or Austrian ambassador went to the Consulta and demanded an explanation. And, frankly, I think they would be quite justified." Imagine the insolence of such a message to a minister of a free country!

But Buelow did not stop at threatening messages. When Albertini's nomination came up for ratification in the Senate, Buelow sent his servile brother-in-law to lead the opposition against it, and, under secret voting, actually secured sixty votes to eighty-nine, thus nearly succeeding in the exclusion of a distinguished man, whose only offence was mistrust of the Huns.

With all the trumps in his hands, and no false shame about open cheating, it speak volumes for Italian courage and patriotism that Buelow should have lost his game and been sent back to resume secret services in the country where he first won his spurs as a spy.

But no one who knows Italians can ever dream of doubting their courage and patriotism as the best of good Europeans.

IV. SATIRES OF THE HOUR

May 1915

ITALIANS all have a very keen sense of humour that is inadequately expressed in their comic papers. Just before the war, however, there appeared a clever portfolio of cartoons, that had an enormous sale and certainly helped to stimulate public opinion by the sternness of its satire. It is entitled *Gli Unni . . . e gli Altri* (The 'Uns . . . and the Others).

Perhaps the cleverest cartoon represents the German Emperor telephoning to Heaven after his Turkish alliance: "Allò! . . . allò!" Whereupon "the good old God," with a grand expression of wrath, replies: "Ring off. . . . You must call Allah now!"

In far more serious vein is a terribly harrowing piece of sculpture. Two beautiful children have only stumps in place of arms. One of them is kneeling before a savage soldier, who smiles to himself: "A couple of arms less for the enemy in future!"; while the other, at her mother's knee, says: "Forgive me, mummy darling, I can't put my arms round your neck now." I showed this to some men in a Ligurian inn, men of light, not to say ribald temper. They took a minute or so to understand. Then I saw their eyes change focus, harden, moisten as they clenched their fists. "*Povera, povera bimba!*" one said with choking voice, "and, oh, those murtherous devils!" It is a really fine bit of work, full of grace and dignity and reticence, and would command applause in any gallery. I should like to reproduce it a millionfold and scatter it through neutral nations if so be that any yet remain.

The crucifixion of Belgium is powerful in a different way. At the edge of a plain, with a smoking city on the horizon, a famished youth has been nailed to a cross, at

the foot of which are skulls and shields and helmets and champagne bottles. France kneels as an adoring Magdalen; a British and a Russian soldier stand bowed in prayer. The awful anguish on their faces is intensified by the gloom of a deep blue night, and underneath we read: "On the third day, rose again from the dead."

A study in yellow—the shade of yellow seen on the flag of a lazaret. William with his huge sword stands in the agonised attitude of one being sentenced to death. Among his courtiers are naked wretches holding vases marked "*Tifo, Colera, Tisi, Sifilo.*" Facing him King Death sits on a throne proffering a decoration: "Emperor, I confer upon you my Grand Cross. You deserve it, for you have given me more victims than all earthly evils put together." The Order of the Cross-bones.

"Trieste is the lung of Germany," said Prince Buelow. So we have Francis Joseph flat on an operating-table. Italy, in surgeon's garb, has extracted a lung with a sword, and observes: "If I had not come first, the other ally would have taken it from you. For the time which remains to you, one lung is more than sufficient."

The book, however, is by no means all gruesome. Indeed, some of it is mildly improper, at least according to the view of British matrons. For instance, there is a big gun that has changed its number from 420 to 100 because it is "*pronto . . . per la ritirata.*" (I am assuming that Mrs. Grundy has no Italian.)

British phlegm: A funny, friendly caricature of a naval officer saying good-bye to his wife, who expects a baby. "I wonder when you will be able to embrace it," she says. "Oh! I hope to be back in time for its wedding."

Thoughtfulness. Chapter I. In Belgium: A house is being looted and a Hun has secured a bangle in a jeweller's case. Chapter II. In Germany: The bangle and case have arrived. Great joy of Gretchen, who shows her wolfish teeth and exclaims: "Look, mamma. Even at the front Franz has not forgotten my birthday."

Truth in the Trenches. A Hun writes home: "In France. . . . My dear parents. Just a line to tell you we are victorious all along the line. Food is abundant, and we have plenty of ammunition. Wherever we go we respect houses, fields, churches, works of art, and even women. See you again soon. Embraces from your loving son.—P.S. Fritz, who wrote just the reverse of all this in a letter the other day, has been shot."

"Aja . . . gaja" (the Hague . . . gay). A number of well-known diplomatists lounging on a bench outside the Palace of Peace. A bomb breaks the bench and sends them all flying. Title: "*La banca . . . rotta della diplomazia.*" (Glossary: *banca*—bench; *rotta*—broken; *bancarotta*—bankruptcy.) Not much of a joke, but a delightful drawing.

Sculpture again. William is grasping the whole globe, which is labelled "*Pangermanesimo.*" A British soldier is smoking a pipe and tearing away the part marked *pan* (=bread), and says he will see about the rest (Germanism) presently. The soldier is good, but William's likeness might be better.

Then we have "Sentimental Exercises" (Huns cutting off prisoners' hands and feet); neutralists as rabbits scurrying into a prudential society; William teaching the Russian bear to dance, and then having to endure its hug; Buelow paying Italian spies and press; Italy taunted by the Entente with remaining at the window while the Porte is being broken in; William decorating his generals with oak leaves, while he casts acorns to his subjects (pigs); Salandra exchanging his dressing-gown for the long-tail coat (*palamidone*), which is as characteristic of Giolitti as high collars were of Gladstone; and an illustration of the Garibaldian hymn:—

> "Si scopron le tombe, si levano i morti
> I martiri nostri son tutti risorti."

There are Silvio Pellico, Ugo Bassi, Mazzini and other

martyrs of Italian liberty, rising from their tombs to hail the new Italy, now drawing her sword again for the old cause.

Some of the cartoons may seem trivial and parochial to us, but, as a whole, the work is admirable in conception and execution, and it has certainly done great service in rousing Italians against the Huns. Art has appealed to the sentiment of an artistic race, and has not appealed in vain.

V. THE PRELIMINARY WAR

1900–1915

WHEN Prince Charlie was arrested in France, the Captain of the Guards knelt before him and bound his hands with white silk ribbons. The courtesy, says an Italian writer, covered the infamy of the act.

With similar delicacy, the Germans, he thinks, might have succeeded in enslaving Italy. But they do not know how to smile; they can only laugh, and so brutally that they arouse the suspicions of the most confiding.

And Italians, with all their pride in Machiavelli, are quite unsuspicious. Tell them that a barber at Taranto or an hotel-keeper at Venice sends monthly reports to Berlin, and they will scout the notion as fit only for cinema plots. Or they say, dear, thoughtless folk, that foreigners are a great resource for Italy, and it would be grand to attract twice their number. Or else we hear: "Spies? Bah! they are invented by governments to increase the secret funds, which are employed against the candidates of the people at elections."

Never was net spread in the sight of a more willing bird. Right down to her declaration of war in May 1915, nay, even when actually fighting Austria on the Alps and the Isonzo, Italy has found it difficult to conceal her toleration of the big, rough German brother, who possesses all the qualities denied to her artistic temperament. He may have done many naughty things, such as violating neutrality and women, mutilating children and cathedrals, disseminating poisonous gases and typhus germs, but wars are not waged with rose-water, Belgium is afar off, abuse is no argument, and, with whatever reluctance, one cannot refuse to respect success.

Moreover, Germans were so useful. A fisherman at

Noli told me that all his best nets were made by machinery in Germany. I bought a packet of needles at Spotorno and found it labelled "*feinste Frauennadeln.*" At Savona, I was offered pencils with all their colours described in the dead language of the Huns. At Rome in 1916 I thought myself lucky to secure a big box of Swedish matches, but when I took it home I struck a long story on the box about "*Deutsches Familien Feuerzeug, ohne Schwefel, ohne Phosphor. Union Augsburg. Entzünden sich nur an präparirten Reibflächen.*" As it turned out, very few of them consented to *entzünden sich* at all, so I was punished for my innocent trading with the enemy.

In all my conversations during the spring of 1915 with the burghers of Turin and Milan and other parts of the industrious north, I found more than a desire for neutrality, almost a sneaking sigh that it was impossible to adhere to the letter of the Triple Alliance. I know it is the fashion to argue, and I used myself to maintain that the alliance was merely one of convenience, that it was based on questions of equilibrium such as only expert statesmen understood, that no sort of affection entered into the affairs of the international household. But that is a great exaggeration. Though among the populace there was a traditional dislike of Austrians, whose grandfathers had to be driven out of Venice, many of the aristocracy and partisans of "the blacks" continued the Austrian sympathies displayed under the Procuratie by their families over half a century ago. And such dislike as there may have been for Austria by no means extended to Germany as a matter of course.

Moreover, there were German wives and German governesses and German music to fill the nurseries and drawing-rooms even before the offices and counting-houses were secured. Remember that the infiltration had been going on for a long time, pressing into every pore of the national life, colouring every point of view, obscuring the vivid ugliness of the poisons.

And it had been accompanied by much material prosperity.

Here is a little anecdote to illustrate the difference between the Italian and German characters. In September 1915, a certain Italian count was employed to find out whether the Trentino was defended. So he had recourse to an Austrian custom-house official, who was under such obligations that he could not refuse to supply passes. But the count had not gone many miles before his passes were examined and he was ordered home at once. When he remonstrated, he was told with a smile that they had a secret mark in the corner to show they were quite useless.

In October, a certain major took up the same errand and found no difficulty about his papers or his disguise. But instead of trusting to his memory, as wise spies do, he wrote all his impressions in a little book, that disappeared mysteriously from his hotel. The most careful search was in vain. However, on his return home, the book was posted to his full name and address with the compliments of the Austrian police.

A third member of the secret service seemed to have much better luck. At Gradisca he met a kind commercial traveller, who spoke Italian almost like a native and explained his slightly exotic accent by his long residence in "unredeemed Italy." They went about together everywhere unhindered and made the acquaintance of all sorts of unsuspicious countryfolk, who told them all the latest news about movements of troops, the number of ox-waggons employed to convey artillery, and the precise position of many forts hidden among the hills. It was only on starting home that the emissary began to doubt the accuracy of the information, for his companion, with many polite desires for another merry meeting, handed him his card—Captain Wildenbruch of the Imperial and Royal Engineers.

The fact is that, while the Germans are refined

experts in espionage, other people, especially Italians, are mere babies at the game. In every war, German maps have proved far more ample and accurate than those of their enemies' headquarters staff. If you or I could dress up as sausage-sellers and run down the Rhine to-morrow, we should probably have nothing useful to report when we came home. But every German school-child has long been taught all the rudiments of map-making and tactics and fortification, so that there was rarely a beer-haired youth with a slashed face or a pork-fed Gretchen with a red Baedeker under her arm whose ecstasies over the chiaroscuro of the Apennines and the sunsets of the Euganean hills were unaccompanied by a shrewd eye to the business of the fatherland.

Marcel Prévost once wrote a stupid book called *The Guardian Angels*, warning our French allies against the danger of employing English governesses, probably the most innocent creatures imaginable, in their households. Of course no one took any notice. But the German Fräulein, with her fat insipid stare and apparent ignorance of everything save her own harsh tongue, has been worming out secrets during the last fifty years. Her employment agencies—notably, the Marienheim of Florence—offered her services only to families worth studying, that is to say, when she was a specially selected instrument.

Here is a remarkable illustration. An arsenal official recently required a German governess for his children, and a Jewish-looking lady from Bonn was sent him by the local agency. He did not much like the look of her and insisted on seeing others, but for one reason or another they could not or would not come to him. So at last he made Hobson's choice of the first applicant. She had not been with him many days before his boys developed an entirely novel interest in the arsenal. All their spare time was spent, with or without Fräulein, in exploring the works and yards, in plying the workmen with intelligent questions, in poring over text-books and

verifying their new lore. When their father asked sarcastically how long the craze was likely to last, Fräulein said huffily that she had supposed an interest in his work would be welcomed. One night he heard a strange noise after going to bed. Coming down to his study, he found her rummaging some secret plans which she had unearthed with a false key. The police found elaborate proofs of espionage among her papers and she was promptly deported,—a futile punishment, for it enabled her to take full reports back to Berlin.

A still easier task was that of the many German syrens who took up their residence at naval and garrison towns. Belonging to a nominal ally, they soon won the hearts of impressionable officers. They were taken about everywhere and allowed to see everything, they assisted at private conversations and asked incessant questions as only Germans can, and, when they occupied the position of wife or mistress, one can guess how they must have rioted in private papers. A civilised woman who sets up house with a man usually tries to assume his nationality for the time being, or at least refrains from injuring his honour, but a German one still regards her distorted duty to Germany as the prime consideration.

I heard of a case where a wife not only copied a military officer's papers but even stole or destroyed them. She was also found to have forged his name to letters of her own invention, thereby causing enormous inconvenience and nearly bringing about her husband's disgrace.

One of the minor offences of German females in confiding households was to misappropriate supplies of official stationery for use in the secret service. A grave scandal that arose at the time of the Algeciras negotiations and nearly had disastrous consequences to the peace of Europe was afterwards traced to this practice.

There was also much private talk about another scandal on the death of a distinguished Italian general whose safe contained detailed plans for the national defence. The

woman, with whom he had been living, produced a will leaving all his possessions to her, and she resolutely refused to allow his papers to be disturbed; they were only obtained at last by a special decree of the King in Council.

The following story of a typical indiscretion was recently published in an Italian book of reminiscences. Towards the end of the summer of 1914, Admiral B. was lunching with an Italian countess at a palace at Venice, and various Austro-German ladies were present. When she pressed him to remain into the afternoon, he replied thoughtlessly that he was very sorry but he was absolutely obliged to go off and inspect some submarines. Now the Italian submarines were supposed to be at Taranto; no one dreamed that any were at Venice. Three days later, however, the Government learned that the admiral's remark had been transmitted to Vienna, and he was removed from Venice with a severe reprimand.

German doctors enjoyed a high reputation in Italy as they did in England and elsewhere. They were specially sought out for nervous cases, and gave hypnotic treatment to emotional women in influential houses. And they recommended masseuses or sick nurses to act as their deputies in espionage. Even German midwives took small parts in the great conspiracy.

Nay, even the dull German professor was pressed into the service. With all his ponderous confusion of mind, he yet contrives to hammer away at apparently irrelevant statements until a definite train of Teuton thought is forced into the brains of his hearers. He lectures about Latin history, art, archæology, literature, always from the Teuton point of view, and though he may leave scepticism about his assertions that the Renaissance was German Kultur, that Leonardo da Vinci was a German called Winke, or that Michael Angelo's real sirname was Bonnroth, he conveys a vague notion that after all the Germans must be very wonderful people. And, while the German nursemaid is ransacking her master's waste-

paper basket, Pangloss is studying and reporting on the mentality of Italian students with the same scientific pains which he would give to a dog under torture in his laboratory.

Moreover, when he deals with art, he is acting as the accomplice of three great spy agencies—the Germanic Institute of Rome, the Institute of Germanic Art at Florence, and the House of the German Artists (called Villa Romana) also at Florence. These politico-artistic institutions stand part of the German campaign for scouting in every walk of life, for captivating and then capturing men's minds by entering into all their interests. While they are dodging Italian laws against the export of national treasures, their archæologists enjoy full liberty to dig near a fort, make maps of future battlefields, cross-examine simple peasants.

Religion as well as art has been harnessed to the Juggernaut car. When I travelled about Macedonia before the Balkan wars, I was much impressed by the missionary zeal of Austrian agents. Catholic priests and churches were even more busy and numerous than imperial consuls and consulates. Not only sea and land but schools and dioceses were compassed to make one proselyte. And everybody knew that the whole effort was to lay ground-bait for an Austrian occupation.

In a similar spirit, the enemy set to work to convert Italy—not to Catholicism, for almost every Italian is either a nominal Catholic or a confirmed infidel—but to Germanism. The very aloofness of Rome rendered her an ideal instrument, as the new Pope has incautiously betrayed to interviewers. The Church is as non-nationalist or internationalist in practice as any Socialist is in theory. Individual priests go off and fight for the civilised powers like heroes, but, all Catholics being brothers, there is nothing to prevent monks of alien enemy origin being welcomed in Italian monasteries.

Since Italy declared war, scarcely a day has passed

without the press reporting cases of espionage by German priests or monks. They flash signals along the coasts, they haunt railway-lines, they sketch in the mountains, and all their discoveries are duly reported to Vienna or Berlin.

When I was at Marseilles for the arrival of the Indian armies in 1915, a great sensation was caused by the discovery that several of the leading hotels had been owned by Germans and run by German staffs. They were shut up suddenly, covered with official seals, and guarded by soldiery. But by that time the harm had been done. German spies had been listening for weeks to the very free conversation of British staff officers, handling their correspondence, using master-keys to their doors. Consider then the vast opportunities of espionage in Italy, where most of the leading hotels have long been owned by Germans or, worse still, by so-called Swiss. Nowadays, whenever a really clever German spy wants to make sure of success, he calls himself a Swiss because he will thus arouse less suspicion. Or if he is not a Swiss, then he is a refugee from Alsace.

On the Italian side of the Lake of Garda, one landlord demonstrated his Swiss patriotism and neutrality in the spring of 1915 by placing a bust of General von Hindenburg in every bedroom. That may have been, however, because Garda has long been abandoned to German tourists, all the notices and advertisements appearing there in their own language.

Besides the frontier district of Garda, German hotel-keepers have been specially active in Sicily (an ideal base for submarines, as was shown by the loss of the *Gambetta*) and at Venice, the first target for an Austrian navy, if one be ever unbottled. From Byron's down to recent days, the Lido there was a mere lagoon-island, where one went to ride or bathe. Now it has been overladen with German caravanserais, whose waiters and visitors could wander at their sweet will about the fortified zone. This

Lido in 1915 was the headquarters of Austrian agents, who had been set to watch the movements of refugees from Austrian Italy.

The following anecdote sounds too bad to be true. During many months of 1914, General von Buelow lived on the fourth floor of the Pension Hanover, 4, Via Venti Settembre, Rome, with an excellent view of the windows of the third floor opposite. Now the house opposite happened to be the Ministry of War and the third floor was occupied by the General Staff. After a time it was discovered that a pair of strong field-glasses enabled a man on the fourth floor of the Pension to read documents on the table of the third floor over the way. Then the War Office decided to invest in thick blinds.

Besides the armies of spies who have made their base in German hostelries, there has been an immense network of German residents throughout Italy. Though naturally mean, Germans are always ready to invest money to gain your confidence if they think they can derive profit from you hereafter. So they have acquired property in Italy to the value of 16 millions sterling, and much of it is situated at important strategic points. Meanwhile, they have dominated districts, subscribed to local charities, organised sports and clubs, established such influence that natives find it difficult to disregard their wishes.

And the humbler classes, who rent villas or apartments, try to disguise their natural aggressiveness and worm themselves into the confidence of their neighbours. They are always ready for a game or a glass in a coffee-house, they entertain, they flirt, they lend money in time of need. All their talk is of the beauty and charm and salubrity of Italy; they rarely speak of home unless it be to pity their less fortunate compatriots, who have to endure militarism and mists. Then all of a sudden you hear that they have departed with bag and baggage, and if they had luck you might one day see them directing an invasion.

An old author once described the Germans as *gens disciplinæ militaris ignara*, but now every man, woman, and child seems to be a born strategist in every walk of life, and the meaner the walk the more subtle the strategy. Hence their transcendent merits as spies.

Read Puttkamer's rules of espionage:

"It is advisable to have a semblance of occupation, and when a spy's business fares badly, it will be bolstered up. Accordingly, many enterprises are conducted for years at a loss. Local confidence must be cherished by means of gifts, personal relations, the foundation of societies, if possible by long residence."

Think of the incessant treachery with which your German worms his way into the confidence of his neighbours, pretends to share their joys and sorrows, gives and takes hospitality, never departing from his Judas calculations on behalf of the nation's enemy. While he is drinking your beer or flirting with your daughter he makes mental inventories of the loot awaiting eventual invaders.

A complete safeguard against German espionage is impossible, for every German is a spy, active or potential. The whole race might be forbidden access to all civilised countries in future, but, even then, how should we guard against Swiss and American disguises?

At any rate, one of the corollaries of the war must be to destroy their industries and commerce, which have been their most nutritive form of penetration. In their case, trade is intended to precede the flag. As a rule they are quite shrewd enough to make their enterprises remunerative, at least to themselves. When there is nothing to be gained by persisting in a business, they may liquidate it, though not until they have withdrawn their initial capital as well as that of luckless native investors, who are left with worthless paper on their hands. But very often they will bolster up a business, that has no conceivable hope of ever paying its way, and they will grudge no expenditure which may eventually serve some crafty purpose.

Throughout their campaign of political commerce, the Germans and Austrians have had admirable lieutenants in their diplomatic and consular services. Any Englishman who has travelled abroad cherishes some bitter memories of unsympathetic officials who misrepresent his country, often, indeed, deliberately, as in the case when they are aliens or even rival traders. A German consul, on the other hand, is his nation's bagman and places all his energies at the service of his compatriots. He is ever on the look-out for fresh openings, that will be reported instantly in likely quarters. But, in addition to legitimate labours, he is the director and representative of spies; he helps them to evade taxes and smuggle; he considers no trick beneath him to further their dastardly campaign. Dastardly is not, indeed, too harsh a word for the commercial invasion, which, with its frauds, forgeries, perjuries, and ruthless treachery, only anticipated the crimes of the military operations, for which it was intended to pave the way.

The first scouting-parties of the great Hun incursion seemed innocent and benevolent enough in the homely garb of bankers. It was only after they were securely established that Italy realised they were ruining and enslaving her, seizing her wealth, controlling her politics, intimidating her leaders in every walk of life. First bankers, then industrials, then Uhlans: that was to be the simple procession.

Crispi was responsible for inviting German capital, chiefly as a counter-stroke to France, and it is not unusual even now to hear Italians talk of the services thus rendered. But German capital only comes as a decoy. When a bank has the appearance of success, it attracts native investments that are duly sent off to Berlin. At this moment there must be hundreds of thousands of small investors in Italy whose pockets are full of German paper and whose savings they will see no more. Moreover, German capital has never consulted any interest

beyond its own. If an Italian industry could be made useful as a subsidiary to a German one, it was encouraged; but if it ever threatened to become a rival, it was suppressed by the sudden brutal cutting off of all credit. The usefulness of German capital resembles that of the rope which supports a man on the scaffold.

It reduced Brazil to the position of a German fief, and was well on the way to make Italy also a vassal. The Banca Commerciale became master of the Italian mercantile marine, controlling the renewal of material, the increase of speed or frequency of service, anything that would prevent competition with German navigation. It imposed German electrical material on Italian industries, threatening to cut off the credit of any who dared to refuse. The Italian cotton industry was ruined by German banks. They also penetrated the Italian motor industry, raised an inexplicable crisis, and multiplied German motor factories in Italy.

Until 1900 German banking was conducted on the sober, conservative lines of Frankfort, and scouted all idea of dabbling in industries. Germany, remember, was still an agricultural country. Then came the frenzied rush of German capital. From 2,384,000,000 in 1900, the industrial investments rose to 30,000,000,000 marks in 1914. German banks became unrivalled in strength, organisation, and ultra-modern audacity.

There were six banks which set out to conquer the world with a capital of about £50,000,000 sterling: the four " D " banks (Deutsche Bank, Diskontogesellschaft, Dresdner Bank, Darmstädter Bank), and two others (the Schaafhausenscher Bank of Cologne and the Berliner Handelsgesellschaft). They devoted their whole resources to setting German industries afoot everywhere, providing raw materials, machinery, and all the plant necessary for world-wide enterprises. They opened unlimited credit with apparent recklessness, but they insisted first upon a minute inspection of the books,

histories, characters, and business relations of every applicant for support. Indeed, they really risked very little, for with their scientific methods of investigation, they knew not merely the precise value of their security, but also the various ways of turning their information to profitable account. Such information would enable them to make money by deals of their own, often at the expense of firms they had pretended to help. All German banks invest deposits in industrials. When they operate abroad, it is not unusual for them to take the deposits of one firm and lend them to a rival, who is thereby enabled to crush that firm. As they disguise their foreign branches under the name of local or national banks, they readily inspire confidence. Or else they control existing banks, buying up their shares, entangling them in debt, putting in their own managers. They know just when and how to inflate or depreciate the stock of any bank, so that they can be picking up money all the time. Again and again they have waited for or accelerated the financial crises—the industrial growing-pains—of some inconvenient firm; then, without an instant's warning, they have brutally cut off credit, called in loans, precipitated a crash. Thus they were soon in a fair way to decide which industries should flourish and which should suffer sudden death.

Nor were they content with picking people's pockets in this doubtless legal way. They went on to lay siege to the honour of men who could affect the great conspiracy of the Teutonic empires. No form of pressure was neglected to decide Italian statesmen against war. Senator So-and-so condemned Belgian atrocities at a public meeting. Oh! did he indeed? Here is a ledger with a list of his investments. If that tannery at Such-and-such were to fail, he would have to retire from politics to a small house in Sardinia. Shall we give him a hint to recant or shall we pass sentence of ruin at once? Or else: What a number of interventionists are loaded up with shares in

the Bank of X! It will make a bit of a scandal if we smash it up, but the wretches deserve a lesson.

The German bankers in Italy are a great detective agency, not unlike the famous Third Section of melodrama, and they know by this time all there is to be known about the finances of everybody worth watching. And he must be a very prudent man who has no chink in his financial armour, who is utterly indifferent to the fate of his investments; a very exceptional man if he does not think twice before incurring the wrath of ghouls who can reduce him to beggary, even when those men are the avowed enemies of his country.

There is an even lower depth still. I have private evidence that this bankers' Vehm-Gericht has been utilised by the princes or pirates of finance for personal ends. One of them, for instance, was enamoured of a girl who was engaged to a rising young lawyer. The German ledgers showed that all his savings were invested in a sugar-refinery. It was forced into liquidation at once, and the engagement had to be broken off. This did not happen to help the financier, but I understand he has attempted a similar game several times since. On one occasion he received a sound thrashing for threatening to ruin a lady's husband if she refused his advances. I could multiply instances of this kind, and also tell stories of attempts to secure national secrets by threatening men with financial disaster. But it is enough to know that a system exists whereby such terrorism is possible, an alien terrorism that was fast bringing Italians to their knees. And, as Pascal said, " he who goes down on his knees usually ends by praying."

Perhaps the most cruel part of the humiliation is that Italians were brought to the verge of slavery by the misuse of their own capital. Take the case of the Banca Commerciale, which the Germans have called " the head of the column of German penetration across the Alps." In 1895, Austro-Germans held 74 per cent. of its shares;

in 1914 only 2½ per cent. Meanwhile, the capital had risen from £800,000 to £32,000,000. When war broke out, it was found that the Banca Commerciale had over £31,000,000 of Italian savings, mostly exiled in Germany. Not a bad outlay on the initial investment of the six German banks who only risked £50,000,000 for the subjugation of the whole world. The poor Italians tried a similar game with the Banco di Roma for the penetration of Libya and the result was a net loss of over £2,000,000.

An innocent person might imagine that, in the event of war, all the fruits of Germany's huge, insidious labour would be lost. Not at all. This peaceful penetration is a chief part of the scheme for armed invasion.

At the first sign of rebellion against Germany's determination to organise the world, all the machinery is turned to advantage. Banking, trade, industry, politics, parties, labour organisations are impressed into the service, mobilisation is impeded, public services are disorganised, national unity is impaired. And later on, the peaceful penetrators are found there to welcome the invading armies, to act as expert guides to everything, from private patrimonies to secret paths in the hills, from strategic points to the names of men ready to trade with the enemy, from agrarian reserves to places of production and repair. And in the last extremity, the invaders would know how to estimate the possible war indemnity within a very few pounds. They would not repeat the mistake committed by Bismarck in 1871, when he let the French off too easily.

Instead of going away when hostilities threaten, the members of the peaceful or commercial army seize every opportunity to remain where they can make themselves useful. Long after their ships had ceased running from Italian ports, the agents of the Norddeutscher Lloyd kept open their immense offices, filling their windows with announcements of German victories and appeals to Italian

neutrality. Compared with their pronouncements, says an Italian writer, the manifestoes of Napoleon sound like the cries of crickets. They organised and maintained a service of war-telegrams and pamphlets, which were circulated broadcast all over the land.

I remember an incident when I was lunching at Savona. The landlord brought me a bundle of papers and said, "You may like to look at this. I ceased opening the things long ago. They come by every post, to say nothing of telegrams announcing the rout of the Russians, and I never show them to anybody, but as you are an Englishman there is no harm." I found a number of war-tracts "with Lady Mond's compliments." Mond? That sounded a German name. But no, this proved to be a British counter-propaganda. The landlord was delighted and grateful. "Well," he exclaimed, "it was about time some one did something on the other side. I will show these to all my customers."

The impudence of the Lloyd people even went so far that they organised an illegal lottery for the German Red Cross with the usual busts of Hindenburg as prizes. Mention of the German Red Cross reminds me of an expedition specially despatched by the Kaiser to Syracuse in 1908. The relief was ample and well selected, but German instincts of commercial penetration were not to be denied even here, for each article was presented in the form of a sample with full details of prices and the best ways of ordering fresh supplies from Germany.

If any doubt remained about the character of German commerce in Italy, it would be dispelled by the significant coincidence that the keenest efforts have always been directed towards naval and military enterprises. Let me quote the *Rassegna Contemporanca:* "By working in Italian establishments, German spies have obtained possession of schedules of our forts, measures of elevation, distances, the positions of roads and paths; they have fixed the points of triangulation and acquired facts

and figures; to-morrow, in the event of war, they can accompany and guide the German or Austrian troops of invasion."

By means of a low tender, one Hermann of Vienna obtained the right to supply table-silver to Italian men-of-war; at the same time he obtained for his agent, Forster, a permanent permit to enter the arsenals when he pleased. In August 1914, Forster was expelled the country for espionage.

A hundred cases might be quoted, but three more may suffice. In October 1914, the Genoa newspapers announced that the supply of electric motors for the navy and ventilators for the forts on the eastern frontier had been adjudged, for reasons of price, to two German firms, and their workmen were immediately relieved from military service by the German Government.

Again, the electric plant of the forts of Exilles (Piedmont) and parts of Venetia was supplied by the A.E.G., a huge German company that dominates the electric installations of Europe and was partly controlled by Otto Joel of the Banca Commerciale.

At Dalmine, in an important strategic position near the Austrian frontier, one Massermann (who prepared the Agadir coup in Morocco for his fellow-countrymen) had a steel and iron tubes-factory. In December 1914, the *Gazzettino di Bergamo* reported that many of the workmen there were German officers, that Massermann had organised a daily motor-cycle service to the German consulate at Milan, and that the factory was really a photographic agency for studying the military positions of the Simplon and Valtellina. Massermann brought an action for libel to muzzle the newspaper, but when the case came on (16th April, 1915) he applied to have it dismissed with costs though none of the charges had been withdrawn.

Perhaps it is superfluous to mention the outdoor advertisements of Kub soups, for they have been utilised in many other countries. But Kub soup is not and never

has been sold in Italy. Yet its huge unsightly boards have been scattered all over the land with mysterious numbers on each for the assistance of an invader. All the roads and points of the Stelvio valley were decorated with these boards in the most elaborate way by two brothers named Harth, who occupied their leisure in photographing the passes of the Alps.

VI. THE PASSING OF PEACE

Spotorno, May 18, 1915

WHEN I walked down the Italian coast some six weeks ago, I roused no curiosity. Even small boys refrained from crying, " Go up, bald-head! " Now, on every little excursion I encounter armed men and, if they do not know me, they want to see my papers.

The carbineers are ubiquitous, especially near the railways, and they tell me they are on duty for very long hours. Not a tunnel but has to be visited at frequent intervals by night and day—and tunnels are probably as numerous here as in any part of the world.

Many portions of this old Corniche road are mined, doubtless in case of invasion: bits of masonry under the bridges and culverts have been pointed out to me as part of the scheme, though most of the mines are naturally known only to the men who have to watch over them.

They are pleasant fellows, these carbineers, often ready to join you in a glass of wine by the wayside; picked men, held in high esteem, half-soldiers, half-police. Fifty per cent. of them have already gone off to the frontier, their place being taken by territorials, who wear a picturesque, old-fashioned uniform with a long tail-coat, whose tails are buttoned back to those mysterious buttons such as we wear behind our dress-coats.

The new Italian service uniform is a grey-green, pretty as well as invisible, and it is only on grand occasions that you see carbineers in their huge cocked hats and vivid red-blue pompoms, trailing their glittering swords. During the last few days, I noticed that the officers have all had their scabbards blacked—one of the first signs of coming war.

The carbineers tell me they have not had many adven-

tures yet. But three foreigners were caught dressed up as women and arrested on suspicion. Then a man was found lurking in an old coiners' cave between Noli and Varigotti with German documents and £300 worth of Italian notes in his pocket. Sketching and photography are unwise just now unless you can give a very good account of yourself.

It is also imprudent to shout with laughter and chatter about spies, as a flapper did while I was showing my passport on the road the other day. The carbineer grew quite stern with her for a few moments, and I pacified him only by quoting a refrain about—

Una bella bambinaia
Colla faccia molto gaia.[1]

This poetic gem is taken from the repertory of some recruits who sat in a motor-car, at least a dozen of them, in the public square of Spotorno the other night singing for at least an hour at the top of their voices. I do not remember ever seeing recruits who did not appear merry, but the Italian ones are certainly as merry as any, and they can be merry without being offensive.

I travelled third class with a dense crowd of them to Savona one morning, and I could see that my exotic appearance aroused surprise. "Don't go too near him; he may be an Austrian," I overheard the whisper. But as soon as I protested I was English, the whisperer was called a fool, as any one with a grain of sense could see I was English. Then there were apologies and compliments and good wishes for our coming alliance.

It is a very mild existence at Spotorno. I swim, I fish, I take my lunch over to the Island of Bergeggi or a constitutional along the road to Noli. For six and a half francs a day I have a vast room on the front with two balconies, morning coffee, two big monotonous meals,

[1] A pretty little baby
Her face must always gay be—except that *bambinaia* happens to mean a nurse.

and as much rough red wine as I can drink. But I am not very happy. Society is limited and there were rumours that I was a spy. For what other purpose could I have potted myself down in this God-forsaken spot out of the season? Besides, I had no luggage. After dinner, the secretary of the municipality and his inseparable friend, the postmaster, would crush a cup with me and make sly inquiries about my travels: Which part of Austria did I like best? Did I speak German? How did Italy compare with Hungary?

Some letters I posted at Noli were marked "To be examined by the censor, as the writer is suspect." I wrote to the postmaster-general to complain, but obtained no redress. After all, the country was on the verge of war, and many think Italians were not half suspicious enough. Then my landlord gave me a kindly warning. The marshal of the carbineers at Noli had said he was coming over to inquire into my case. I wrote to the marshal, giving him references, but he neither took them up nor made any reply. Then I tackled him in the train, and he stoutly denied that any such words had ever passed his lips.

Apart from burghers and people in coffee-houses, who always read newspapers all day long, I find rather little interest taken in the war. Men of military age have now been waiting some time to be called. Instead of public proclamations, they received letters by post telling them to hold themselves in readiness—a sort of private mobilisation that has its advantages. And they have trickled off to the frontier without ostentation.

The chief topics of conversation are: who has gone and who will go next? Departure is viewed with a fatalist's spirit: rather a bore, but all in a life's work. Then it is mitigated by a preliminary departure. The young men go off to receive uniforms and return to strut about the village and arouse the admiration of brown maidens.

"I have not slept a wink," mine host of the Croce tells

me; "the wife was sobbing all through the night because I have to go and make war."

As a matter of fact, she had other grounds for sorrow, her little boy having just had two serious operations, and her naughty spouse having been smacked for trying to flirt with the cook.

Pippo, the grocer's son, pores over a German phrase-book during every interval of the receipt of custom, and is collecting all small debts to supply his pocket-money at the front.

Mariuccia, the cavaliere's servant, is jumping with joy because her husband may go off at any moment; then she will no longer be beaten and can devote her earnings to her children. The wretch gave her youngest, twenty-two months of age, two big glasses of red wine the other day, causing intoxication and mild convulsions. But babies here are hardy; otherwise they do not live long.

Cerribelli, the man of means, who owns a motor-bike and wears a yachting cap and thinks nothing of seven francs a day for board and lodging and would play cards all day at the Caffè Ligure, if only he could find players—why, he has had a call to arms and must leave all his luxuries. *Accidente!*

But we are not so sure about Tombola, the noisy, jovial young man who drives a donkey-cart and a thriving trade selling anchovies and artichokes along the coast. He is as quick as lightning with his chaff, sticking a feather in the village drunkard's hat and calling him Cecco Beppe (Francis Joseph), or eliciting smiles and blushes from sun-stained beauties by his rough gallantries. The invariable retort is to ask when he goes to war; his invariable reply: "*Dopo domani*" (After to-morrow).

The following conversation with Pippo, my boatman, illustrates the knowledge and temper of the average elector:—

"Well, Pippo," I asked, "are you going to the war?"

" I shall go if I am called, but I am forty-two, and have an old father to support."

" I expect you would rather not go? "

" I am quite ready to go if I am wanted. But tell me one thing—against whom would the war be? "

" Why, against the Austrians, of course. Against your hereditary enemy. Don't you read the papers? "

" No, I can't read."

" But surely you hear people talk? "

" Not about politics. They don't interest us fishermen. One thing about the war preparations is worrying us, however. The brigadier has gone off to the frontier, and we can't get our fishing permits for the year. I shall fish all the same. As the brigadier is away, perhaps I shan't be prosecuted."

" What do they charge for your permit? "

" Three francs a year, signore."

Such are the chronicles of the coast during the last few days while waiting for war.

VII. THE DISTANT DRUM

Spotorno, May 25, 1915

WAR was declared yesterday and there are doleful strains from the village. These Ligurians chaunt with the eastern twang of Saracen ancestors. Another funeral, I suppose. There have been as many these days as though the war were at our gates.

It is high noon and I am taking my sun-bath on the inn balcony. I peer out with care to conceal my nudity from the approaching crowd. It comes in two files like a flapper's pigtails under the very green trees. I believe some ants proceed so. Here are dark, handsome women, for the most part, swaying slightly in order to march slowly. Tall crucifixes are borne aloft in the centre of the dusty road. *Ave Maria! Ora pro nobis!*

It is not a funeral, though sounding just as sad. Here is the golden image of Our Lady of the Annunciation with eight strong men staggering beneath the great weight. Here are priests in full canonicals. Then the crowd all over the road, with heads reverently bared in defiance of fierce southern sun. There is full fervour in the dirge, the piteous plea for Mary's help in time of war. These or their dearest will fight for Italy within the next few days.

"These demonstrations should be stopped," says Allegria, the freemason, whom I meet presently in the red, hot sea. "The war-law forbids concourses of people; besides, this kind of thing upsets people when they need all their courage. The priest here is a rank neutralist. Luckily, he has to go off to the front this week."

"Would you have the police prohibit women's prayers?"

" No, let them pray at home. This is not the hour for public woe."

Nor is it yet an hour of public joy. A long train passed this morning full of recruits, who showed banners and inscriptions protesting, " Down with the war! " I am told Italian soldiers will fight splendidly, but they have not yet learned to conquer initial emotions.

Michelangelo called this afternoon to say good-bye.

" As there is a heaven above us," he exclaimed with his fist in the air, " if I get hold of an Austrian, I will make him pay for my flour."

His wife, Mariuccia, it appears, went last month to the shop where they have an account and asked the price of flour.

" Forty-six lire the sack."

" Very well, put aside a sack for me, and Michelangelo will fetch it to-morrow or next day."

" With pleasure."

But Michelangelo could call only on the third day.

" Here is your flour, but now it will cost you fifty-two lire. The prospect of war has made the prices rise."

" But I bought at forty-six, you rascal."

" Yes, but you did not fetch, and now it is fifty-two."

The rest of the conversation is improper.

So the first Austrian is to bear the blame.

According to the tables, Mariuccia was to receive two lire eighty centimes a day for herself and her four children while Michelangelo was under arms. But the eldest boy is twelve (she is not quite twenty-seven) and the authorities say he can earn something, so she is to have only two lire ten centimes. She means to appeal, for he is not a strong boy: if he carries more than forty-four pounds on his head, he grows pale and has to rest, whereas her next son, aged eleven, can carry one hundred and ten pounds with ease, while she has managed two hundred and four pounds herself for half a mile.

When Michelangelo received his call, he had one

hundred and forty lire in his pocket. Out of this he had to pay away forty, and he proposes to take the balance with him, as he likes good cheer and will need all his strength to keep his pecker up. When he receives his pay (which is one halfpenny a day) he will try to send Mariuccia something. Meanwhile, she has nothing in the house and must wait a month before the Syndic begins to pay her pittance. This may partly explain her tears at her lord's departure, even though he does beat her when full of wine.

During the afternoon, motor-cars and trains passed with gay floral decorations. Flags appeared at one window after another. A telegram to the Municipio; then a huge standard was displayed.

The good news had come from Savona that Italy had won a great naval victory within the first few hours of war. Three Austrian dreadnoughts and two destroyers had been sunk off Pola, four other warships captured, with Italian losses *nil*.

Lissa was avenged.

I do not think I ever beheld such spontaneous and universal joy. Every eye beamed, every heart was full. All talked at the top of their voices as only Italians can. Congratulations were received as personal compliments. I think I must have gripped a hundred hands. There was little liquid celebration, but ceaseless song.

Cerribelli walked with me among the fireflies and told how he had foreseen this blow, which would surely be followed by an equal victory on land. How specially fortunate that it had come so soon! Easy elation was a characteristic of his countrymen. Now the reluctance of conscripts would disappear; the worst neutralists would recover their patriotism.

We passed the village chemist and his family.

"Good evening, Signor Pietro, what a glorious victory!"

"Yes, if it is true."

"Of course it is true. Government has telegraphed to

every Syndic. The *Secolo* had a special edition. I telephoned to Genoa to make sure."

"Well, I hear the Stefani Agency has sent out a contradiction."

"*Ma!* It is run by a German. And who told you, pray?"

"Why, the baker. He has just returned from Savona."

"The baker!"

And Cerribelli turned away with an oath. "That chemist ought to be throttled," he remarked, pleasantly. "Curse the little neutralist! As though the censorship would have let the news through unverified. You can always trust news in this country. Why, during the Libyan War, we heard of our defeats before our foes knew that they had won."

Far into the night I heard songs of triumph. Doubtless they were heard throughout Italy. Now in the hard light of morning, we learn that there has been no victory. But the only comment is, "We must have patience. The hour is only put off."

"*Un po' di pazienza.*"

PART II.—WAR

I. THE KING

THE extreme democracy of Italy has always vented itself in the freest criticism of the monarchy. During the feverish agitation of May 1915, when many feared Italy might yet shrink on the brink of war, the name of King Victor Emmanuel III. was frequently taken in vain. The press published impudent caricatures and openly accused him of being swayed by Austrophil courtiers, chaplains, aides-de-camp; the mob roared "War or Revolution!"; society whispered all sorts of sneers about his stature, his numismatics, his economies. I heard one foolish body actually call him a coward!

Economical persons are rarely popular, though theirs is often the loftiest generosity. From a king above all others extravagance is expected, especially by those who impose its burthen. Some moral courage was therefore necessary when Victor Emmanuel decided to dispense with all unnecessary pomp and luxury, setting an example to a poor country and providing for the chances of an uncertain future. Perhaps this courage was most signally shown when he closed his game-preserves, for Italy is a great respecter of the chase, and the House of Savoy has long sporting traditions. Three years ago he gave up his boar-hunt in the Abruzzi; since then he has ordered all the wild boars to be killed off in his preserves of Astroni and Licola, as well as all the occupants of his famous pheasantry in the woods of Capodimonte. And it is not as though he despised a day with the boars and the pheasants, for he was brought up to an outdoor life like an Englishman, as most Italians of the richer class are;

and whatever he has taken up he has always done very well.

Poor little man! So small and rather alone. He has a splendid wife, worthy daughter of the grand old lion of Montenegro, and he finds much homely happiness in his sturdy family. But he has been the subject of slights and indifference; indeed, it is only in Italy that we know how near he was to exile in May 1915.

Now the hour of pity seems like a bad dream, for he is far and away the most popular man in the kingdom; the Republicans are among the loudest in his praise—indeed, as Republicans, they have almost ceased to exist. Every man, woman, and child is marvelling and shivering at his reckless courage.

Yet there is no special need to marvel, for he has always been first and foremost wherever there was a whisper of danger. Surely no Italian can have forgotten the magnificent devotion with which he toiled and exposed himself during the great cholera-epidemic at Naples and the earthquakes of Messina and Calabria. So modest, too, about his services. When a courtier remarked that the presence of his Majesty would go far to allay the sufferings of the victims, he immediately replied, " Don't talk nonsense."

It is his simplicity which endears him almost as much as his courage, for Italians are a simple, natural people. He has never grovelled to his subjects as some mock monarchs do. With all his affability, he is as proud and independent as any old Roman.

He is probably the most constitutional of monarchs ever known. In fact, his extreme constitutionalism did him harm. Even democrats began to say that they could understand a Grand Monarch or a Father of the People, but that they had no patience with a mere voting-machine. Why, any president had more to say to things than this king. It was his very correctness which caused his temporary unpopularity during the Salandra crisis.

He is almost a dwarf, with a colourless face, now a bit



The King—God Bless Him!

bronzed by the elements, a crisp, manly voice, and a way of laughing with his eyes. He stands erect, with his short legs rather wide apart, and is usually very calm, very serene, at the same time very human, sometimes too ready to yield to emotion. His hair begins to grow grey and there are furrows on his forehead and beside his mouth, yet he bears himself like a young man, walking fast and never tiring. He speaks little and simply, always to the point, looking men full in the eyes with magnetic effect, awaking strong feelings wherever he goes.

He says *tu* to everybody in a fatherly way and rather welcomes familiarity from soldiers, who treat him much as they would any officer—if possible more freely. He is just one of themselves. Yet none have ever taken advantage of his good nature, though some have expressed their fears for his safety with excessive frankness. He laughed very heartily when an old soldier cried out to him in a panic, "Nay, Majesty, what be doing here? This be no place for thee. Get thee gone at once."

He buzzes about the front in a little grey motor, without clattering escorts, precautions for his safety, armies of cooks, or any creature-comforts. He sleeps little and cares not where, is quite happy in an Alpine hut or on straw, enjoys roughing it indeed. His fare is of the simplest—a little cold meat or salame, bread and cheese and chocolate—and he is always ready to share it with the nearest soldier. The little grey car carries a plentiful supply of cigarettes, which he distributes lavishly, often leaving himself without a smoke.

He interests himself in all the thoughts and moods of all the men he meets. "Dear me, what a lot of post-cards! Are they all for sweethearts? Give them to me and I will send them with my own letters. Such things should not be delayed." "Why do you look so glum? No news from the family. I've had none from mine either. Cheer up! I'll send a wire for you to inquire."

Then see him with glistening eyes praying over a dying

comrade. Here is a touching story of a soldier's last words: "For you, Majesty," the man cried as he stretched out his arms and gave up the ghost. "Not so, my son," was the grave reply, "—for Italy!"

When he was Prince of Naples, an explosion took place as he was visiting a powder-factory. He said nothing, but drew his blue cloak rather more tightly round him and went on with his inspection. It was only discovered later that he had been wounded and had tightened his cloak so as not to show he was bleeding.

Here are some extracts from soldiers' letters, which illustrate the impression he has made on his armies:

"In our barracks, under canvas, in the trenches, in the valleys, on the mountains, we feel that the King is present everywhere, that the King sees us, inspires us, commands us, understands us. It is no mere rhetoric to say that for his sake it is sweet to suffer and to die. Garibaldi and Napoleon exercised a similar fascination."

"I seem to be in luck, for wherever I go, I meet the King. As a matter of fact, it isn't luck at all, for he is everywhere. Yesterday, he went with the Duke of Aosta to watch an important action. The enemy, espying a knot of officers at this point, but without knowing who they were, began firing shrapnel at the royal party. The King did not move in spite of the respectful remonstrances of his adjutants. He and his cousin remained quietly gazing through their field-glasses, while the soldiers looked up in amazement from their covered positions. After firing for about a quarter of an hour, the Austrians ceased, and it was only then that the King and Duke withdrew from their exposed position, passing through the lines of soldiers who cheered him frantically."

And here is a dramatic narrative:

"The orderly grew angry and cried, 'Go away, go away, can't you see that men are dying all round you?' But it was too late. A shell burst a few yards away and the lieutenant fell, mortally wounded. He called the

soldier and gave him a few keepsakes to convey to his family, exhorting him to fly. But the soldier was trying to find a way of carrying the officer to a place of safety. Some gunners called out to him through the infernal fire, 'Save yourself, save yourself!' but he still remained. In the distance a motor-horn could be heard. 'It is the King going away,' the whisper went round. The soldier bent over the lieutenant's body, resolved to do something desperate to save him, but the lieutenant was drawing his last breath. The soldier, flinging himself on the corpse, exclaimed with tears, 'Even the King has gone away.' Then a hand was laid on his shoulder. He shook himself, rose, and stood to attention. The King stood before him and said, 'My dear boy, the car has gone, but the King is still with you.' And there they remained till the end of the day."

II. THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

It is odd that nearly all the leaders of this emotional people should belong to the category of strong silent men: the King, the late Premier, the Foreign Secretary, and the Commander-in-Chief.

Not that General Cadorna eschews sentiment or even tenderness. But duty and discipline overshadow all else in his mind. He would probably have preferred to devote himself to science, but he was sent to a military college when he was ten, and he has schooled himself ever since, as he has schooled everybody else. Even in his boyhood he was noted for his intelligence, industry, discipline, and piety, and he has remained much the same from that day to this. Once or twice, he has confessed, they put him into a very cold cell on bread and water, crushing any tendencies to impulsiveness which may have lingered in him. His father was a Crimean veteran, and, despite considerable respect for the Church, commanded the troops which took Rome from the Pope; an old-fashioned Piedmontese nobleman, he brought up the present Commander-in-Chief on strict military lines. The result was a smooth, prosperous career with all the blessings of having no history. Luigi Cadorna always did what he was told and what he was expected to do, but he always did it very well, and he possessed independence as well as initiative. For instance, he tendered his resignation when a Government refused him something he thought necessary for manœuvres. His friends warned him that the resignation would probably be accepted and end his career; but he said he did not care, and he had his way.

With his uneventful career, he was really an untried man when he came to the supreme command; but he had all the signs of one born to command—a personal

magnetism that inspired confidence everywhere, faith in himself, untiring energy, and a high character—as well as charm of manner and old-world chivalry.

Slow and sure, everything is clear and mathematically precise in his mind, so that he has no difficulty in convincing the dullest; for this purpose he spares no patient effort. When he delivered lectures at a military college they used to last for hours, but they were always packed, and all voted them full of instruction. When he was on the Commission for the defence of Genoa, he spoke for hours without any notes, and Giolitti, the Premier, who heard him for the first time, was amazed by his command of facts and figures. Though he does not pretend to be an orator, his lucidity usually carries all before him. If he is inflexible, it is because he seeks no reinforcement from other people's minds; it is said that no objections can move him, because he has already considered them all. Never doubting or hesitating himself, he permits no one else to doubt or hesitate either. Strength and confidence issue from him and inspire all with whom he comes into contact.

He is not so much silent as sparing of words in conversation. His words might be bullets to be reserved for a specific object. Sometimes he will seem inattentive, but he is listening all the while, and will join in fast enough if anything occurs to correct or elucidate. Then he will go on until he has completely shattered your argument and nothing remains to be answered. In fact, his is the sort of talk which would be more successful in a law-court than at a dinner-table.

" The art of war," one of his phrases runs, " is simply a matter of common sense "; and that is the keynote of his career. His famous little work on the frontal attack is a masterpiece of common sense, though it has been criticised by persons who do not know the difference between tactics and strategy.

And here is another quotation from his writings:—

"Discipline is the spiritual flame of victory. It is the best disciplined troops which win. Before it is materialised in facts, victory must glow with absolute certainty in the hearts of the officers and thence irradiate irresistibly with palpitations of joy throughout the ranks. An iron discipline is indispensable to follow up that victory which the country confidently expects and which the army must give it."

His zeal for discipline may have earned him a reputation for severity, but war is not a time for indulgence of the unfit. Remember that France has already dismissed one hundred and twenty generals during the war and no one has dreamed of complaint. Cadorna regards himself as the chosen instrument of Fate, and cares not who is exalted or abased so long as the war proceeds efficiently. The significant fact is that no one has ever dreamed of wanting to supersede him.

A story is told of a non-commissioned officer who had earned three medals for valour and a report saying he had "always performed the most daring tasks with complete success, arousing the admiration and confidence of his subordinates, comrades and chiefs."

"Why is he not given a commission?" Cadorna asked.

"Impossible, sir. He can't write."

"But who wants him to write?" was the instant reply. "I want him to take trenches."

On the other hand, I heard of a conversation he had about promotion for the higher commands, from which he has tactfully removed the senescent.

"I suppose you choose the most brilliant men," an ambassador remarked.

"No, no," Cadorna answered; "we don't want brilliant officers. In our land of sunshine, brilliancy is already too common. We are all brilliants, though some of us are imitation gems. What we want is quiet, serious, studious folk, who don't move in too great a hurry—none of your legendary heroes."

Among the first to suffer from this attitude was Peppino Garibaldi, who had become a French colonel before Italy joined in. Cadorna was loth to make him even a captain.

"He is one of the bravest men on earth," some one pleaded.

"That is bad," said Cadorna. "Let me see: 'Under the hail of the bullets, he laughs and sings.' Very bad. 'At the mere sight of him, the soldiers rush to their destruction as though possessed by sacred fire.' Very bad indeed."

"Yes, but courage . . ."

"No, no. You must first teach him not to get himself killed and not to get his men killed. Romantic heroism is a defect, not a virtue. A leader must not fear death, but neither must he despise life. What is wanted in a commander is coldness, seriousness, method. Our friend Peppino seems to me too ardent to command a battalion. Let him begin by learning to obey. We will make him a lieutenant or a captain."

And Peppino accepted not merely obediently but gratefully.

There is another story of Cadorna being asked to see that one of his tenants' sons was kept out of danger in the field; but his answer was too obvious to need repeating.

He is easy of access in his big, airy saloon at headquarters. The atmosphere is calm and cheerful, though the outlook over mists and bare trees might depress many people. When he is alone he is nearly always walking about with his head bent between his shoulders. He stands up to think, as though he wanted to dominate the object of his thoughts. Few have found him seated at his desk, a large table in the middle of the room covered with maps and papers. The only ornaments are an Austrian 305 shell on a wooden stand and the keys of the fortress of Monfalcone. That fortress ceased to exist a

long time ago, but the town delivered the keys to the liberator.

In appearance he is bony, but square. His whole face is deeply lined, and his hair is white, while his eyes are surprisingly young for sixty-five and often gleam with fun. He smiles with frank cordiality, sometimes a little sadly, and perhaps the smile comes to you from rather far away. His voice is deep and strong. He makes expressive gestures slowly with his big hands.

He is a fine rider and a keen climber, but not interested in sport. He has travelled a little within the beaten track—to Belgium, England, Tunis, Algiers. He takes no interest in politics and cannot understand the use of politicians. He reads a great deal, old books for choice; for instance, he reads the Bible every night before he goes to bed. He is a practising Catholic, likes music, loves children. . . .

A homely man who inspires intense devotion.

III. THE BERSAGLIERI

THE sun was trying hard to make up his mind to shake off his fleecy sheets in the bay of Genoa, and show that ruddy, dissipated, cock-crow brow of his over the island of Bergeggi, when I became aware of a faint green coil on the white road, of a faint familiar air:

I bersaglieri vanno,
Le piume sul cappello,
Davanti al colonello,
Noi dobbiamo andar.[1]

Here they were round the corner. First an officer on a bicycle, travelling so slowly that his wheels scarcely revolved. Then the band, changing tunes every few moments, a perpetual pot-pourri, always reverting to the vigorous, characteristic jog-trot of the bersagliere song. To-day on route-march only a few wear the famous black tuft of cock's feathers in their hats; the others have the undress caps—bright red fezzes with long tassels at the back of their heads, displaying almost clean-shaven foreheads. But all maintain the bersagliere tradition of perpetual motion.

The key-note, or leading motive, is a sharp shake of the shoulders. If you want to practise this, clench your right fist and try to pummel your left shoulder; then repeat the operation with your left fist towards the right shoulder. Go on doing this faster and faster till you are ready to drop.

Every nerve and muscle is on springs. They sway, they swing, they leap, they almost fly as they march; they

[1] Italian marksmen go,
With feathers on their caps,
Before the colonel so,
Our duty calls us chaps.

march with their arms and heads and caps and feathers and tassels as well as with their legs; every part of their machinery is working at fever-heat all the time.

Even their lungs must never rest, so they roar a babel of conflicting songs against each other as they go, jerky songs coalescing in one insistent call, which sounds like: "Hurry up, hurry up, 'rry up, 'ryup!"

They march with very quick, short steps—as fast as they possibly can without running, and some must run from time to time or they will be left behind. If they deliberately tried to keep out of step, they could not succeed better. And the liveliest of all—a very Jack-in-the-box—is the bandmaster. He waves both arms, spins his head, pirouettes backwards, stamps on the road, leaps into the air, all as though about to execute a somersault from a burning deck.

What violent gaiety! What amazing vitality! After they have broken up into batches and drifted into the various public-houses, all suddenly opening to welcome them at cock-crow, I can still hear them singing and whistling and cheering, and even the band can't remain altogether mute for long.

It is now past six and a dozen of them are sitting at tables beneath my balcony, eating salami-rolls, cheese, hard-boiled eggs, chaffing the maids, calling for wine, beer, and fresh water. Every now and then one of them breaks out into trills of very grand opera, while two or three others hum something else—Rallallah!—and beat time on the wooden tables. An officer is making vain efforts to study a map at another table and looks up to jest from time to time. Rifles are piled in the street with flowers stuck into many of the muzzles.

All very affable when I come down to chat. They are three hundred recruits in training at Zinola, a suburb of Savona, and they are route-marching a dozen miles to give them an appetite for breakfast.

They talk, much as they sing and march, in short,

sharp, friendly barks. One has just heard from his brother in hospital: a hundred started to attack a hill and only ten got through. His brother was one of the ten and has three wounds.

Bersaglieri are famous for their charges. My friend Cerribelli says they "go like one bayonet in one impetuous rush." Perhaps rather like arrows with one whirl of their black feathers. Anyhow, like Hell.

Bersaglieri are indeed famous for all they do, for their courage and simplicity as well as for their vigour and gaiety. As one of their officers explained to me, they bother very little about commissariat. If they have a bit of bread and half a black cigar in their pockets, their only remaining needs are a little straw to sleep on and a little water to scoop up with their hands. Indeed, they will not grumble when they have to do without the straw.

Judging by their conversation, they seem to have acquired what we call good form. They never brag. They have that ancient, proud humility which still lingers in certain highlands. You see, they are a picked corps, and picked corps, like chosen people, cherish traditions. One of their traditions is never to complain, whatever happens. Another is to remember the rules of chivalry, to conquer without crime. They succour the fallen, respect women, worship the enemy's children.

Bersaglieri are now in their eightieth year, having been founded on the 18th of June 1836. I asked whether this meant that they would have been with us at Waterloo, but my indiscretion was laughed off in view of present alliances.

I was shown a letter from the front describing the anniversary celebration in June 1915. The King was present of course: he is always present everywhere at the front.

First there was a sort of gymkhana with a race to the enemy's trenches as the chief item on the card. This

having been brought off successfully, the competitors gathered round their colonel for a speech. He recalled the glories of the old bersaglieri, Italy's martyrs, the great and beautiful fatherland. He affirmed that the bersaglieri of to-day would always do credit to the traditions of their predecessors. He invited all to assist reverently at the celebration of Mass, the symbol of all our dearest affections, and he declared that religion and self-respect were the two sublimest sentiments that man can cherish. Then Mass began.

In a little hollow scooped out of a verdant chine, a small primitive altar had been raised, a rough table covered with a white cloth, two candles, a tabernacle, and a crucifix. Before it, two big tricolour flags fluttered in the wind; at the four corners, four stacks of rifles, with fixed bayonets glittering in the sun, served as stands for the plumed hats, which are the pride of the corps. At the Sanctus, the bugles sounded the hymn of Mameli, and a group of sweet singers raised to Heaven the thrilling words:

Fratelli d'Italia, l'Italia s'è desta.[1]

The song rose with the slow solemn tune like the supreme invocation of a whole people, strong in its rights, fighting for fatherland and civilisation. The early sun shone marvellously over the surrounding mountains, all the bersaglieri were on their knees with bare heads, the banners fluttered amid the shimmer of the bayonets, all around was a border of blazing rhododendrons. . . . That is how a bersagliere writes home to his family.

Soon after seven, songs and salami, chianti and conversation began to pall: my friends were reasserting the restlessness of their corps. One suggested they should march a bit further before breakfast—say, to Finale. Another voted for Ventimiglia, some sixty miles away. Anyhow, anything to be on the move. The officer agreed more like a picnic-comrade than one in authority and

[1] O brothers of Italy, Italy has risen.



Highlanders Climbing with Ropes

(Note the men in impossible positions)

bugles began to blow. All the same, the company took a long time to collect.

This is not a big village, but they must have penetrated into the uttermost recesses, judging by the amount of flowers they had acquired. One had a truly bridal bouquet of white oleanders stuck into the breast of his tunic, others carried carnations, dahlias, gardenias, myrtle blossoms in their mouths or over their ears, but rifle-muzzles were the favourite receptacle.

Now there was a dreadful alarm. The band could nowhere be found. A corporal declared it had been heard five minutes ago parading the old streets of the hill village; a young fisherman swore they were on the terrace of the *Pace*, tasting Valentina's Noli wine. A bicyclist scoured the places of call, popping his head in and saying, "*Trombe!*" (bugles)—all in vain. Fancy losing the band all this way from the front!

At last they were unearthed at the Miramare just across the road, calmly discussing anchovy sandwiches. Out with them into the road, to play in front of the Italia, while the crowd chaffed, brown Fannj and browner Miletta bore trays of beer, and new arrivals called for incessant changes of tune. The latest comers were racing like madcaps, yelling, whooping, laughing, cannoning into one another, almost scattering the band.

Few if any commands were heard. The bersaglieri drifted into their places in the middle of the road, looked round as though to say: "Are we all here?" then drifted off—as an avalanche might drift. The bandmaster spun about more madly than ever. I did not see such contortions even in the tekke of the Aïsawa. Four became five, then six, linking arms and executing a quadrille. Some one improvised a new song to the old bersagliere tune:

Evviva Spotorno,
Città di belle donne.[1]

[1] Long live Spotorno,
Town of pretty girls.

Then in the last rank there were two funny soldiers who waltzed along the road with their rifles as partners. What boys! Nay, better still, what broths of boys!

Some two minutes after the last tassel had waved good-bye round the corner, a post-ultimate straggler came up in pursuit, a tall, gaunt man with a slight limp and a sad face. He had a fir-cone in his barrel. It fell out on to the dust. Some boys stooped to pick it up for him, but he shook his head mournfully and hobbled on. I hear that he has since committed suicide because the doctors pronounced him unfit for active service.

IV. INCIDENTS OF MOBILISATION

"We have too much liberty in Italy," is Cerribelli's parrot-cry as he sips iced syrups and preens himself in his new uniform.

"It is impossible to have too much liberty," I remonstrate politely.

"Virtues become vices when carried to excess."

"Perhaps. But what a delightful vice!"

"Listen," the corporal-major interjects. (He was my barber at Monte Carlo and is now overweighted with responsibility as a sort of minor centurion.) "Twenty reservists (*richiamati*) are quartered in an old church at Noli. They must be in by twenty-one o'clock (nine at night) and I am responsible. I am usually there by a quarter-past and read over the roll. See, I have it in my pocket: Gandullia, Gambarotta, Tronconi, Casanova, Birbante. . . . Not more than two or three are absent. I go and split a litre with the marshal of carbineers at the Roma and turn in at my quarters in what used to be the school. Next day I hear that half the men were all over the place till two in the morning. What do you think of that?"

"Does it matter very much here, so far from the front?"

"Perhaps not, but there ought to be more discipline in time of war. Besides, I am held responsible."

"And what do they do to you?"

"Oh! nothing, but it is unpleasant to be reprimanded, especially when it is not my fault. What can I do? They are good fellows, but you can't persuade them that they are serving their country by going to bed at twenty-one o'clock. Then they are so sublimely casual. Last week three of them obtained twenty-four hours' leave to go

and visit their families. One came back after two days, another after three, and the third is still away. He calmly wrote for an extension of leave because his wife was expecting a baby."

"And aren't they punished?"

"Oh! yes, but nothing that matters. They are told that, really-really, they ought to be shot as deserters. They laugh sheepishly and are perhaps deprived of their leave next Sunday."

"Well, I dare say they fight all the better for being treated as friends instead of machines, as they would be in Germany. You have all the benefits of conscription with the patriotic enthusiasm of volunteers thrown in."

"That is perfectly true," a convalescent captain assented doubtfully, "but this family spirit has its drawbacks. Men want to know all the reasons for every order, and one hasn't always time to explain while the bullets are whistling round. They seem to consider themselves shareholders in a national enterprise with unlimited rights to cross-question the chairman."

"You don't mean to say they are reluctant?"

"Reluctant! By Bacchus! No, very much the reverse. Say you have to send some one to take a message to the rear. Nobody will go. Or at least there will be grumbling and protest and argument. 'What fault have I committed to be sent out of action even for five minutes?'—that is the tone taken. Tell a man to go into the thick of the fighting and a dozen insist on going too. They scarcely listen when you tell them they are wanted here. Sometimes you have to take them by the scruff of the neck to hold them back. They are like fox-terriers who have just scented a rat. Often they will set out on the most desperate enterprises without orders—in defiance of orders. They look on defiance of an order to keep quiet as a form of courage. They are risking death all the time, and they do not see why they should not risk a reprimand or even a court-martial for the sake of their country."

" And you are not very angry with them? "

" No," the captain replied shortly with glistening eyes, " I am proud of them."

" They are great babies, great sentimentalists," the corporal-major mused. " I bought a lamb to be fed up for the *onomastico* (name-day) of the regiment. Now it is almost a young sheep, tamer than any dog, and follows everybody about, pushing its nose into our hands, sitting up and begging, doing all sorts of odd tricks. It is quite proud of the tricolour ribbon round its neck, and the little bell."

" But I suppose you will eat it all the same? "

" *Ma chè !* When the *onomastico* drew near I suggested that as a joke, but the men were as much horrified as though I had talked of eating the relics of San Paragorio."

" What is the soldier's attitude towards officers if there is so little discipline? "

" The officer is a father or an elder brother, according to his rank."

" Yes," the invalided captain smiled, " and the filial devotion is sometimes a bit of a nuisance. The men seem to think the officers ought never to expose themselves. As a matter of fact, they would despise us if we didn't. But in the heat of the moment they will remonstrate quite roughly, order us back to cover, try to protect us with their bodies. If one of us is wounded, nothing on earth will induce them to leave us even though they can be of no real use."

The country is properly paternal towards its soldier-sons. Anything in reason to oblige. On the calling up of reservists, they were stationed as near to their families as possible. When mine host of the Croce went off, his wife wept all night, but he was soon moved back to a semaphore two miles away and has plenty of leave. The landlord of a pot-house at Noli has returned to duty in the same townlet, and can devote six hours a day to the receipt of custom. Fifty men are to be transferred from

Noli to Leghorn next week, but they are told to draw lots, which means they may arrange it among themselves.

The other day I found the cavaliere's wife up to the eyes in ink, inditing a letter to the Queen of Italy. She appealed to her Majesty's tender heart to help a poor woman in sore distress.

"What is the trouble?"

"Oh! the postman's wife, poor wretch! He has been sent to a fort in central Italy and she is left with four little children and only eighty lire (say three guineas) a month to support them. The postman ought to be transferred home."

"But they can fare pretty well on that; many families must be much worse off. Anyhow, what has the case to do with the Queen? Does the Queen know you?"

"No, but I have written to her about other cases; also to other members of the royal family. They always do what they can."

What busy secretaries they must have!

Mariuccia, the cavaliere's servant, jumped for joy too soon when her lord went off to war. It is true that he can no longer beat her so often or make her baby drunk. But he has been attached to the carbineers two miles away. Hence a ludicrous incident. Last night she strolled down the road with a young fisher, who is interested in starlight and fireflies. At a cosy corner near Bergeggi tunnel, a challenge rang out with almost Prussian ferocity: "Who goes there?"

"Oh! is that you, dear? Are you looking after that tunnel? How is your tooth-ache?"

"*Sacr-r-ramento!* What are you doing here?"

"A little walk, a pleasant talk. I have never yet seen the big cave by moonlight."

"And where the devil are the children, *schiffosa troja* (foul sow)?"

"Where should they be but at home, angel of my life?"

"And who is looking after them, you piece of a paralytic stroke?"

"No one, *bel pesciu* (lovely fish). They can look after themselves now there is nobody to give the *bambuccia* wine. What a pity you cannot come down and divert yourself with us."

She knew that it would amount to desertion if he left the line for an instant. But he had a loaded gun and full powers to deal summarily with suspects.

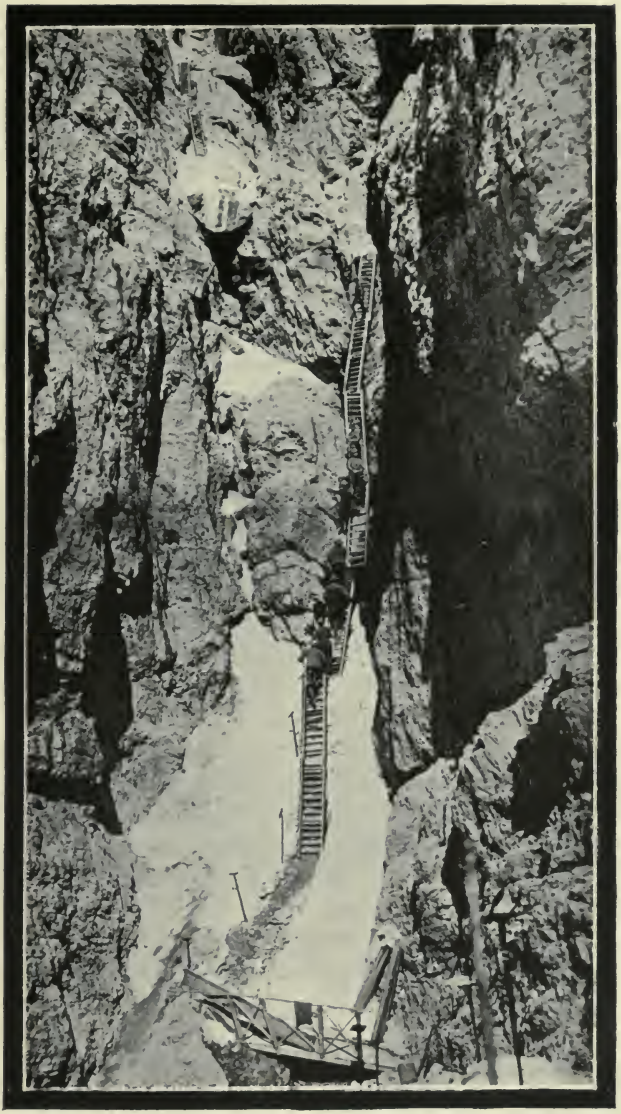
And his next day's leave may be lively.

V. HIGHLANDERS

BEFORE the war, I suppose the bersaglieri were the most popular corps in Italy. Now the Alpini are the darlings of the populace. This is their war. The nature of the battlefields has brought their peculiar heroism right into the limelight.

A glance at their history shows how they have been perfecting themselves during centuries for the present campaign of emancipation. It is one long epic of desperate struggles against frightful odds. Even the Roman Empire could not subdue them; they held out against the prime kingdoms of Europe, mediæval and modern; six highlanders repelled an army corps, sixteen (of whom only six had muskets) routed six hundred. Oftener than not their only weapons were the rocks of their own mountains. They were the fathers of modern trench warfare, 370 of them keeping at bay the armies of the King of France and the Duke of Savoy in 1690. Again and again they have been almost exterminated; they have seen all their property in flames, their women and children put to the sword, but nothing has ever affected their indomitable courage and powers of resistance.

The Waldensians are, of course, the best known among them. Their origin is lost in antiquity. They may be said to have invented Protestantism before its time. Unlike most Protestants, they cherished their own simple faith for centuries before the Hunnish Reformation, and Catholic prelates admitted that, apart from their heresy, they led exemplary lives. Their virtues, however, did not deter them from committing hideous massacres on their own account, according to the spirit of the age, whenever they had the upper hand. Nor did their virtues exempt them from repeated attempts at forcible con-



Highlanders Going Upstairs

version. Crusades were organised against them whenever Christendom was not otherwise engaged. Oliver Cromwell, stupidly imagining a kindred Protestantism, secured a short respite for them, but, like most of the fruits of his usurpation, it was short-lived. To sum them up, the Waldensians may not have been very nice people, but they were, perhaps, the finest fighters in the world.

They and the other Alpine denizens have been fighting, almost without intermission, since the darkest ages to the expulsion of Austria from Lombardy and Venice. It is impossible to imagine better raw material for organised mountain warfare. This was realised by Victor Emmanuel II. in 1872, when he formed them into a corps. His new kingdom was, however, so poor that his army remained a mere skeleton for some years, and the Alpini were slow to reach their present state of perfection. Now they form at least eight regiments, besides three of mountain artillery, and they are counted among the elect of the Italian Army.

They are more solemn, more earnest than the bersaglieri. Even their headgear testifies to this. Instead of the soft, low, rather lady-like hat with its cascade of cock's feathers, they wear a kind of Winston billycock or brimmed policeman's helmet, with one short, sharp feather pointing straight upwards. You do not find them jumping about in the roads or playing practical jokes or behaving like big children. They are cheerful enough, but seem to take life and death more seriously. Yet they have the simple, sentimental, childlike character common to most mountaineers. This character exists throughout the Italian Army, but theirs is more pronounced.

Here is a typical incident at the front. An Alpino came to a ruined house where three little girls were picking roses while shells moaned and fizzed over their heads. They offered him some of their flowers, and he suggested they should go and stay with his little daughter in Italy

out of harm's way. "Oh, no," they said; "thank you very much, but papa is fighting near here—and besides, the roses would all die."

If the Alpini have a fault, it is their excessive generosity. They will give their last fruits or cigarettes to Austrian prisoners, scatter their last coins among the enemy's children. And yet what greedy rascals! They will bound out of the trenches, jump the wire entanglements, risk death a hundred times to go and pick a few figs or grapes.

They are full of simple faiths. They believe in vampires, hobgoblins, witches, fairies. They also believe that Christ died for them, that the Saints protect them in all their daring deeds. In time of peace they think nothing of walking a dozen miles to replenish the oil-lamp before some miraculous image of Our Lady. And when a highland shepherd or soldier comes to a wayside cross or chapel, he kneels down, with his forehead on the stones or snow, and prays for the glorious dead, for a glorious victory.

Among many of the Alpini companies you find large bodies of men who, from sheer devilry or disappointments at home, have dedicated themselves to death. They are known as the "lost souls," and are always ready to volunteer for any forlorn hope. There are so many of these that the difficulty is one of selection. Thus five-and-twenty men were wanted for the famous capture of the Freikofel: five hundred immediately offered themselves. And those who cannot be accepted for dangerous service are very much aggrieved. They regard it almost as a personal affront to be passed over. They murmur; they inquire petulantly what fault has been laid to their charge.

The fact is, they are all perfectly fitted by training and tradition for any acrobatic feat on the Alps. They snort like war-horses when they return to the snow, which is their native element. They are as much at home on the side of a precipice as any Chamounix guide; from

their earliest infancy they have been scaling perpendicular cliffs for their pleasure, chasing chamois, swinging themselves from peak to peak like human apes. No rock is too sheer or too slippery for their ascent, though they be weighed down with all the accoutrements of war. They are specially expert in the use of ropes, with which they lasso the crags above in order to assist their climb. But the defenders are ever on the alert, and often cut a rope, dashing its human burthen to the abyss below. To circumvent this, canny Alpini throw up decoy ropes. Then the Austrians rush forward and cut them while other Alpini are creeping up another way. Once at the top, they rush the enemy's stronghold, and usually carry it by storm, for nothing ever seems to tire them. But the Austrians prefer more cautious methods. When they want to attack a mountain they wait till dense clouds have filled the valleys, so that they can wriggle up unseen. At the summit, they pause to recover their breath, then open a heavy fire to test the strength of the defence, and only fight at close quarters if there is absolutely no other alternative.

Perhaps the chief exploit of the Alpini has been that of making military alpinism fashionable, of inspiring the very lowlanders with the desire and power to climb. After all, the battlefield is extensive and the Alpine regiments are few. And every Italian seems to possess a wonderful gift of adaptability. Not only do recruits from the torrid South thrive on the pure, cold Alpine air, but men who have never seen a mountain take to granite walls as ducks take to water. If the present war is prolonged for another year, Italy may easily possess a whole army of Alpini.

VI. FIGHTING ON THE ALPS

At first I regarded the Italian war as rather a domestic affair, and smiled over Italian assumptions of its supreme importance. It seemed intended to accomplish little more than expansion to the natural frontiers. Now, however, one begins to realise what help it has afforded by occupying large forces of Austrians, what hopes it offers of turning the scales in the Balkans, what prodigies of valour it has revealed.

It is utterly different to all other wars, and looms very small on a map. Correspondents lately returned from the Russian front are amazed by the contrast of this miniature with the vast Armageddon they have followed on the frontiers of Poland. Here a few hundred yards are of more strategic importance than hundreds of Muscovite miles, and the effect of taking them is just as conclusive.

To realise the character of the operations, it is well to glance first at the scenery of the battle-ground where the brunt of the fighting is taking place.

The thirsty Carso is an avenue of undulating hills, none above 500 feet, yet very advantageous to the enemy, who must be expugnated by sheer courage and recklessness. The Dolomites, on the other hand, are wildest fairyland, magnificent, mysterious, terrible, demanding superhuman efforts. They glitter fiercely in the sun, casting uncanny lilac shadows over the fantastic rocks, which cascade like glaciers towards vague valleys far below. Or they frown and weep and hide themselves in gloom: strange, defiant mountains of weather-beaten greys and reds and yellows, with peaks like ancient castles and snowclad towers of silence and cathedral spires nestling amid aureoles of clouds.

Take the Freikofel as a characteristic sample, the Freikofel, which was first taken by five-and-twenty Italians, then lost and retaken five times. A high irregular dome of basalt with sheer sides all grained with fissures, whence melancholy forests of scrub sprout as though by magic, sky forests with firs and pines and larches, deriving their nutriment from the clouds, from the rocks, apparently from nothing at all: they seem, when the winds rage, to murmur some secret language of their own, to mutter defiance of the black clouds which gallop through them and over their rugged branches. Among them you may espy patrols of Alpini and strings of mules moving about like shadows in the noonday dusk.

They are fighting at altitudes ranging from seven to ten thousand feet, fighting the mountains and the elements as fiercely and patiently as they fight the Austrians. Snow-storms are frequent, and the cold is intense. Even in August it would freeze all day long, staggering and shocking fresh arrivals from the burning plains of Lombardy. In piping times the ascents would have puzzled all but experienced Alpinists, who know how to crawl up walls like flies, to cling to every crack with finger-tips and eyelids, to wriggle up sheer smooth faces of rock with never a nook or cranny for a foothold, to jerk a rope over some distant crag and climb up it with true Simian agility, regardless of bottomless pits below. I have often marvelled over the exploits of Alpine acrobats, who conquer incredible cliffs for sport. But these Italian soldiers are burthened with heavy packs and guns and picks and telephone-wires and other impediments that would worry them even on the flat. And they are exposed to the enemy's fire all the way up; at the summit they find no sort of cover against an immediate bombardment.

They have not a moment's respite after their superhuman climb. With shells bursting about their ears, they must instantly seize their axes and turn the scanty mountain vegetation into huts or slender shelters, wrestle

with rocks if there be any chance of forming some apology for trenches. And in rare intervals of leisure, still under fierce fire, you may see them hacking down trees and flinging them to distant torrents to be polished against the stones, or rescued and turned into houses, furniture, field hospitals, crosses for soldiers' graves—there is no time to make coffins at the front.

It is difficult enough to conquer an undefended mountain, but to take one that has already been fortified by the enemy would seem the wildest of nightmares to those who know not the Alpini. The Austrians are very smug in their protestations of never having desired or expected war with Italy, but their preparations went on for years on the most prodigious scale. Consider the fort of the Pozzacchio, which the Italians surprised in June 1915. It is a colossal work that must have cost millions of crowns. It is not built, it is scooped out of the rock 3193 feet up, with troglodyte corridors and halls and munition-rooms far away in the bowels of the earth, dark galleries with loopholes twinkling faintly in the distance, platforms for guns and mortars—in fine, a fortress and an arsenal. And every comfort for the officers: baths, douches, hot-air stoves and electric lights. All this connected with the Austrian lines by twenty-six miles of splendid road.

But the Italians admit no rivalry in the art of Alpine warfare. Look at yonder gaunt rocks, look as long as you like through your strongest telescope, and you will discern naught but crags and snow, not a crack, not a protuberance, till you crawl along a little path over the abyss and come suddenly upon the entrance to a tunnel. It is just an open doorway, and all is darkness within. Grope your way, a long, long way, and there are glimmers of light down cross corridors to right or left; at last you come to a little blind window revealing a peepshow on a prodigious scale, and the enemy's positions on the mountain opposite. You are now more than 9000 feet towards the sky, in a

position that dominates the Stelvio Pass. The loopholes are only just large enough to admit of taking aim, and the gunners are far safer than in any fortress. At the back is a whole system of covered passages and trenches of communication and deep galleries for artillery.

This is the method of Italian hill-fighting. First, there is a long period of silent, patient preparation. The Austrians are lulled into a sense of false security. Then comes a violent attack. There is much hand-to-hand fighting on the rocky chain. Men hurl one another down precipices or dive headlong in frantic embraces. Mountain batteries play upon the enemy and help to clear a way for the strenuous advance. The Austrians are driven further and further up the hills. At last they are exterminated or taken prisoners, for when an Italian attacks a mountain, he sticks to it with bull-dog tenacity and never leaves it until it is his.

No labour is too arduous for him, no peak inaccessible. When there is no other way, he will devote long months to constructing broad, smooth Napoleonic roads right up the high mountains, replacing the roughest mule-paths. You may see one of thirty miles to an outpost 7475 feet above the sea, an armoured road with parapets, behind which an army can ascend in safety. When peace comes, the peaceful Alps will retain a wonderful network of roads as their inheritance, and the redeemed provinces may have reason to bless their conquerors.

VII. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ENTHUSIASM

An officer thus expressed himself to me during the early stages of the Italian war: "A German is brought up to be a soldier just as a law-student is educated for the bar; but an Italian has hitherto been the negation of all discipline and his successes in the field are nothing less than a miracle. The horrors of modern war are so great that imagination or sensibility excludes the possibility of that calmness on which discipline entirely depends. When I hear people talk about the enthusiasm displayed by our men, I say to them, 'Either you do not know the meaning of the word enthusiasm, or else you have never seen a battle.' There is, of course, a certain vivacity during a bayonet charge, when the cry of '*Savoia!*' causes the nerves to vibrate and removes the depression inseparable from a period of waiting, but courage is only indifference of danger, acquired by habit."

There is a substratum of truth in this exaggeration. The Italian soldier has Garibaldian traditions to add fuel to the fire of his temperament, and his instincts are all for dashes and rushes. But a winter of trenches and tunnels and barbed wire has taught him to adapt himself to sober conditions, which he frankly dislikes. That, however, is not to say that he has lost his sentiment or his careless gaiety or his desire for speedy results. As a husbandman at home or a maker of tunnels and bridges and roads in every part of the world, he has been unsurpassed in patience and skill; then, however, he has always had a definite end in view, whereas much of the present mole-work seems painfully futile: in his opinion it may do for Huns but not for artists. Nor is he easily induced to be parsimonious about public property. When accoutre-

ments are dealt out by the million, he will not watch over every strap and buckle, indeed he will often leave or throw away articles that might still have their uses; or he will make a parting bonfire in which you detect the splutter of stray cartridges. In the same lavish spirit he is always ready to share his food or his last cigarettes or any comfort even with prisoners. The enemy's children gather round him in gleeful crowds, just as the little Arabs did during the Libyan war.

But to deny him enthusiasm in action seems to me monstrous. Take this extract from another officer's letter, quite a different version of the Italian soldier's psychology, written by one who does know what enthusiasm means, and certainly has seen a battle: "Towards ten I received orders to attack the right part of the trench. I mustered my men. How they looked me in the eyes! Two or three bits of advice. The bayonets gleamed. 'Now then, boys; forward, Savoy!' I can still weep when I think of that moment, of the enthusiasm, of the impetus with which the dear fellows followed me. I could hear but one roar, as they responded that they would eat up Cecchino (Francis Joseph). The space was traversed in a flash. We found ourselves under the wire entanglements, which were almost entirely intact; but we did not stop there; we passed through them with difficulty and plunged into the Austrian trench. Any amount of prisoners, but oh! how many shrapnels, how many grenades were exploding! A hell, an incredible hell! Meanwhile I fling myself to the left to join the Sixth, and at the very moment when I am talking with their Captain a shrapnel catches me and sends me flying. I find myself on the ground with my legs in the air. I think calmly to myself, 'Now I am going to die,' but when I find I don't die I begin to examine myself, and discover a wound on the left wrist and another on the left thigh. A little tincture of iodine, and off again. The sight of blood and of the dead and wounded among my men had excited me. I crossed the entanglement and

ran to rejoin the three remaining squads. I do not know what I shouted to them; I remember only that they replied with a tremendous yell and flung themselves headlong into the trenches. What caused them most enthusiasm was the sight of the *Cecchini* prisoners. Just fancy, one corporal and two men alone took twenty of them on the wing. Now, however, I could no longer stand up, and the Captain had to have me helped to the surgeon's tent. . . ."

Here, again, is a private's letter to his family, with a fairly healthy dash of enthusiasm: "To give you an idea of yesterday's experiences, I will begin by saying that the artillery prepared the action with admirable precision, bombarding the enemy's works without a pause and without wasting a shot. During the night, various Highland battalions advanced. They clambered along the mountain like chamois in perfect silence; not a stone was disturbed; not a rustle betrayed our arrival to the enemy, who waited securely in their inaccessible positions. It was only when we came within six yards of their trenches that a sentinel gave the anxious call to arms. Who can reproduce the superb cry of 'Savoy!' roared by thousands of iron throats from breasts of brass? Oh! the intoxicating cry, the boiling tears of enthusiasm as they roared that war-cry with voices rendered hoarse by fatigue and anxiety and the frenzy of nailing down the foes in the trenches whence they had disseminated death. The cry must have frozen them and paralysed them. And they nailed them down in the trenches! With bayonets, with stones, with teeth; we pounded them with our fists; we were like drunken men. And 'Savoy! Savoy!' we yelled untiringly. I could relate infinite episodes of heroism, sublime exploits of calmness and courage, displayed by all without exception during that most brilliant action. I will tell you only that, out of about 3000 men, not one escaped. The long file of prisoners, wending their way down the hill this morning, looked with stupor at the



Vedette Ascending the Summit of a Mountain



Vedette Firing at Small Enemy Post

little Italian soldiers, who shared their meat with them and prepared beds of clean straw."

The chief charm and interest of these home letters lie in their absolute naturalness. There is no false shame about boasting, any more than about confessing the temptation of fear. You can see the machinery of their minds at work. Here, for instance, is one who does not conceal his tendency to shrink: "My captain came up to me and said, 'You are a strong, brave fellow; will you go with the scouts?' I answered quite simply, 'All right, sir, if I'm wanted, I'll go.' And the day before we started my dear Captain said, 'If you've changed your mind tell me, and I'll send somebody else.' I answered him, 'Sir, I mean to keep my word at all costs.' He said, 'Bravo,' and gave me his hand and embraced me. I gave him a good grip. Our job is to go and find out the enemy's strength, what arms he has, where he is placed, and what he is doing. These reconnaissances take place every eight or ten days. The remainder of the time is all rest."

And here is a nervous, poetic temperament: "I, too, have been in some danger, but I did not lose my presence of mind. Remember that I am only twenty, and it was my baptism of fire. My neighbour fell down wounded. I bent over to see if I could help him, but he was too far gone, so I went on. The first night I was dead tired, and, owing to the scantiness of our quarters, had to sleep beside the corpse of a comrade. My worst danger was on the fourth day. A shrapnel killed my right-hand neighbour and broke up nearly half my cover. I came out of it unscathed. A holy angel protected me. And here I am ready to begin again, sound and strong and confident in the strength of my fellows, only waiting for the order to storm other trenches, so that the banner of Italy may float victoriously over the feathers of the bersaglieri."

And here is an example of mind over body: "I write with an exulting heart. I am or ought to be dead tired, but who feels anything any more? Who still owns a body

capable of suffering at moments like these? Who troubles any more about hunger or sleep or complete physical exhaustion? My heart is in a tumult, every fibre of my being is shaken, but I am full of pride to be an Italian soldier, an Italian Alpino."

After some considerable acquaintance with the Italian soldier and his temperament, I venture to deny that his "courage is only indifference of danger, acquired by habit." Such courage may belong to Huns or machines. That of the Italian soldier looks danger in the face, not with indifference but alertness, and stares it out of countenance.

VIII. GRAVE AND GAY

SPRING takes a long time to reach these icebergs, but the Italian soldier seems to scent it from afar, redoubling his natural gaiety and welcoming the early order for an advance. No less than his French ally, he has belied the traditions of easy discouragement with which the Latin temperament is associated. It has been a bitter, muddy winter of moles'-work and crawling like flies on precipitous walls without due glory and glitter; but he has fought depression as keenly as though it were Austrian, which it probably is.

And his victory is largely due to his sense of humour —a peculiar compound of sentiment and mischief and fancy and dramatic instinct.

Here is the sort of incident he loves to dwell upon. The nights have been long and dreary within speaking distance of the enemy's trenches, relieved only by an occasional exchange of ribaldry. Suddenly there is a display of crackers and coloured lights, followed by guttural hurrahs. This is not the usual prelude to an attack, but what on earth are the dogs doing? They have started a gramophone with patriotic hymns; they are beating tom-toms and yelling with glee; one of them begins a speech in broken Italian with all the lurid eloquence of a cheapjack at a fair: " The Austrian eagles are triumphant on every field. Serbia and Montenegro are conquered; Russia is overrun. Why continue to struggle against fearful odds? Italy is at our feet. . . ." The speech is soon drowned by hoch-coughs from comrades and derisive Latin repartees, invitations to burst oneself (*crepare*), clamorous cries of " Pig! " and " Dog! "—all rather genial in a crude, schoolboy way.

One of these chaps who has been answering "Ja!" with "Yah!" was one of four recruits from a little village on the Lago Maggiore. The other three fell on the same afternoon. As he can't write, he has to dictate a letter to his mother, who will have it read by a learned neighbour: "I think three glories ought to suffice for a small place like ours, but if a fourth victim is wanted I am ready to embrace Death as joyfully as I embrace you, dear mother." This is very characteristic speech, not in the least high-falutin, as it would sound from Northern lips, but just natural and serious and smiling. They talk much more of their patriotism than we do, and we need to acquire a smattering of Latinity to distinguish human, natural talk from brag. "I am ill," the missive continues, "and the doctor says I ought to go back a bit and rest, but I hear there is to be some fighting to-morrow, and I don't want to miss that." There was some fighting on the morrow, and Mother Death did embrace him. The key-note of Italian heroism is simplicity.

Yet *furbo* and *astuzia* are the two favourite words in Italy. A dictionary would probably interpret *furbo* as thieving, roguish, rascally; but that is quite wrong, for every Italian is proud of being *furbo*, and the word does not exclude honesty. Sharpness, quickness, diplomacy, capacity are implied, but also much more than can be indicated in less than a volume. Here is an instance. A slim, pale, witty, patient, gracious pot-house landlady, Valentina of the *Pace* at Spotorno, was left in charge while her husband went to the Front. One evening some carters became aggressive in their cups, and I offered to expedite their departure. But she whisked them out with a few caustic words, and the verdict was that she was *furba*. *Astuzia* is much more gentle and friendly and merry than astuteness. It means taking an advantage that has its laugh in its tail. Your Italian is very anxious to show that he is clever, but his cleverness must be full of honey; he would be unhappy if you detected the faintest suspicion

of gall. All his overcharges are incidents in a game of poker. Mischief and laughter are the coins of his realm.

The favourite Austrogoth taunt is to call the Italians "mandolinists." This gave an idea to a party of humorists, who were growing tired of a monotonous winter in the trenches. They determined to give the enemy a true Neapolitan serenade. It was quite a romantic night, with fleecy clouds and a full moon, when five Romeos tuned their guitars and mandolines as they crept out into the shadows. Then, right under the noses of the slumbering Austrians, came a sudden outburst of mellow melodies, proclaiming endless love in mocking tones. A number of sleepy faces peered over the parapet, as though in a strange dream, and were received with a volley of revolver shots. There was a wild alarm, Mausers were silhouetted against the sky and began to retort. Evidently the impertinence had been punished, for the concert ceased. No, it began again further down the line, accompanied with choice invectives specially characteristic of certain Italian districts. A great war of words ensued, with a comic climax. One of the singers, who had a smattering of Croatian, yelled out, "*Zhiveo italianski Trst!*" (Long live Italian Trieste!), to which came the instant reply, "*Zhiveo slovenski Trst!*" (Long live Slav Trieste!). Then followed a great hubbub in the trench, shouts and curses and violent smacks; Teuton officers resenting the disloyal cry that Trieste is Slav. It was with a great roar of laughter that the merry band returned from their serenade.

Company was expected one night in a very muddy trench, and the commissariat was rather low. A noble subaltern, who prided himself on his wood-craft, volunteered to snare some game. He crept out at the risk of his life and set all sorts of traps with the astuteness of the wisest poacher. But the total bag was one Austrian scout, who entered into the spirit of the sport when he

was dug in the ribs and asked if he would rather be roast or boiled.

Baby incidents like that seem worth mentioning, because they illustrate the attitude of the Italians at war. The Italians love glory as they love scenery and monuments and blue skies and Memnonian seas; they have realised the infinite unimportance of death and pain; they are children of nature with all their cards on the table, or just one as a joker up their sleeves. They want to win in order to have the last laugh and to display their astuteness; at the same time they want to restore civilisation, to redeem oppressed provinces, to revive the majesty of Rome.

IX. IN THE TRENCHES

THE Italians are more Spartan in warfare than most of their Allies. They have no barbers, bathrooms, beds, lounges, libraries or creature comforts in their trenches; practically no protection, just a long ditch, a heap of stones and a slender covering of brushwood. Sixty days without a wash or a change of raiment is nothing out of the common. One frugal meal a day is served with military punctuality. Hunger, however, they tell me, is not so great a tyrant as the perpetual thirst, which sets the whole body in an agony, rendering men insensible to the wounds and deaths of their best friends. They open their mouths to try and refresh themselves with a little icy air, and their mouths are immediately filled with burning earth. Blessed is the rain when it comes and fills a few pannikins, even though it dislodges the stone parapets and makes knee-deep mud and renders all the mountain paths like rinks.

In the trenches, everybody and everything is earth-stained. The dainty, grey-green uniforms have been soaked in slime ever since the Italian war began. The motionless soldiers look like mummies or gaunt sacks of rags. The sky weeps, the trees shed frozen tears, the cannons groan, the bullets sigh. What heroism to maintain a stout heart in such a woeful atmosphere! Yet the officers' great difficulty has been to restrain the exuberant joy of their men. Newcomers have always wanted to laugh and shout and sing under fire. It is only after long training that they learn that noise assists the enemy's aim, that silence (one of the first commandments of Cadorna's decalogue) is an essential of safety, that Machiavelli was right when he compared love with war because " their successes are best matured in silence."

When at last the sun does shine, all are instantly stimulated to higher spirits, though his appearance is always the signal for redoubled cannonades. Sometimes the great guns go on booming and reverberating along the valleys for days and days; then the rains and clouds come down and there is a silence that may be felt.

It affords a strange sensation to stand on some high place and watch the effect of a bombardment on the enemy's lines. You may see their trenches catching fire by spontaneous combustion, like fermenting ricks, and belching dense columns of smoke which circle slowly up towards the sky. Or else little white clots of cloud appear in rows above their earthworks, following one another like candles being lighted on some high altar.

The most famous of the Austrian defences, which runs from San Michele to Monfalcone, has been dubbed by Italians *trincerone*, "the big trench." It was dug in zigzags, cemented and armoured like a fortress, protected by a wide field of mines; having the shape of a horse-shoe, it could rake both flanks as well as the front of an advancing force. In front of it was the most prodigious wire entanglement yet seen in the war, each wire being nearly half an inch thick and defiant of any nippers, defiant even of ordinary cannon; the only way to uproot them was with big shells bursting a yard in front and exploding their strong foundations. Again and again, fruitless efforts were made to cut the wires. Two hundred volunteers rushed out and not one came back. Two hundred and yet another two hundred followed with the same result. To approach this almost impregnable battery, it was first necessary to cross the Isonzo, an exploit that will ever be counted among the most glorious of Italian warfare. Then the enemy flooded the intervening territory to put any further advance quite out of the question. At some points the floods were over six foot deep. But the Italians are of Napoleon's opinion that, though many things are difficult, none are ever im-

possible. They opened sluices and closed dykes and soon reduced the flood to a quagmire, threw planks and bridges over it, and waded with mud up to their waists. Then, after three days of frightful artillery, they took the *trincerone*, Lord knows how, rushing it like demons, seeming to tear away the stiff wirework with their teeth, leaping the armoured and cemented trenches, and bursting upon the affrighted enemy like a tidal wave.

The Italian method of trench defence is more deliberate and more efficacious than the Austrian. Orders are to reserve fire until the last moment. Not a breath, not a movement, not a sign of life until the Philistines be right upon them. Then an avalanche of flame from every rifle and every machine-gun, a sudden holocaust of hundreds, followed by the surrender of thousands. In one such onslaught, by the irony of fate, it was found that every enemy wore an armlet inscribed "*Nach Rom!*" (To Rome!)

The Austrian trenches are often only forty or fifty, their outposts fifteen yards away, and rough chaff is exchanged between the opposing lines. There are polite allusions to macaroni and mandolines and (for some cryptic reason) umbrellas from the one side; references to hounds, swine, barbarians, from the other; and Cecco Beppe, the contemptuous nickname for Francis Joseph, is frequently taken in vain. But the insults are usually good-humoured. The stock conversation is for the Austrians to proclaim that they are on their way to Rome, and for the Italians to answer, "Perhaps, as prisoners."

The precision of Austrian artillery is certainly inferior to that of the Italian. Before a bombardment of Italian trenches from afar, the occupants of the front Austrian trenches are always withdrawn, lest they should be hit by their own side. But the Italian gunners are justly confident in their aim and clear away the enemy's hosts and trenches in front of a headlong Italian charge.

Most of the Italian trenchmen's time seems to be de-

voted to carrying great sacks of earth in every direction. They hug them even while trying to rush the Austrian lines, dump them down to form primitive cover when the fire becomes too hot, and sometimes empty them over the enemy's heads on reaching their trenches.

What has impressed me most about the trench-life is the intense feeling of brotherliness which it engenders between officers and men. This does not relax discipline. Indeed, the men do not respect or like an officer who does not know his own mind or fails to impose it. Meanwhile, they chaff, they jest, they are familiar, like sons or brothers in the presence of a beloved elder. And there is much voluntarism in their active service, though it has some drawbacks in practice. Call for ten men for a desperate enterprise and a couple of hundred offer themselves immediately; ask for men to dig trenches in comparative safety and all remain mute.

One might imagine that men of a nervous, high-strung, vivacious temperament would soon be overwhelmed by the endless monotony of the trenches, but the Italians have been so thoroughly electrified by the intensity of their patriotism that nothing seems to damp their ardour. The only times I have seen human nature reassert itself among them has been when they were wounded. As soon as they were tucked up in hospital, they slept heavily for days. Their weariness acted as an anæsthetic, and seemed to render them insensible to pain. They almost welcomed the wounds which had procured them the long forgotten luxury of bed.

X. WIRE ENTANGLEMENTS

THE more I contemplate military operations, the more convinced I am that this war is not so much a war of trenches, as most people imagine, but one of wire entanglements.

It is all a question of evolution. Disraeli summed up the Darwinian theory with the proposition that "we were fishes; we may be crows." Similarly our armies have been moles and may become doves (*Tauben*) or albatrosses, but are now in the intermediary stage of fluttering like flies in spiders' webs.

Trenches were a great advance on forts, which stood forth, isolated and proud, to be shot at. Trenches are in constant touch with their bases; they can be made anywhere in an hour, they can resist after a day, they are very strong at the end of a week. Their chief weakness is that they are solid, and cannons eventually destroy all solid things, just as dripping water does. They can also be rushed when lives are held cheap.

But wires can never be rushed, and they are not solid enough to afford fair game for artillery. After hours of bombardment, they stand up as gaunt and defiant as ever; or else shells have uprooted them, tornadoes of molten metal have whirled them about, and they form a fresh labyrinth more impenetrable than ever.

They are now the chief characteristic of campaigns. They have given their imprint to the war, reducing the most impetuous to immobility. They stemmed the flood which threatened Paris. As a French officer said, fondly caressing a bit of barbed wire, *C'est ce cher Monsieur Barbelet qui a sauvé la France.* Unfortunately, they also saved Austria from the first inroad of Italian arms.

At the battle of the Marne they were merely strong connecting lines of wooden posts—the sort of fencing with which vulpicide farmers irritated the successors of Mr.

Jorrocks. Then the posts became solid iron, screwed, driven, cemented into the ground; the wires were thickened and barbed and made square or triangular so as to baffle pincers; they were reinforced by "Frisian horses." These have the advantage of mobility. You throw them out in front of your trenches and spread them forward at night-time with sticks or pokers; by a new refinement, you also drench their woodwork with petroleum and set fire to it, whereupon the wires are twisted by the heat and wriggle about in the most impenetrable formations. These are not so defiant of artillery and can be blown back, though not often far enough back, for the process is like blowing away thistledown; after describing capricious parabolas, they are apt to return to the least expected places.

There is something peculiarly horrible about the sight of a forest of wire entanglements. Skeleton shrubberies wave their thin, grey arms towards the sky for miles, linked and huddled together, whispering in ghostly conspiracy; and, when the wind comes, it does not prattle or sing or even sob with the healthy music of living trees, but makes strong men shiver by the harsh cynicism of a metallic laughter. And sometimes, when the moonlight steals across the snow, you espy shapeless bundles among the low branches hanging like over-ripe, forgotten fruits; or there in a fold of soil are windfalls of clustered corpses, jerking themselves convulsively, peering out hopelessly for some way of escape, human scarecrows, gallows' fruit, a Dante dream. And you feel uncomfortably that the scarecrows can no longer scare. Clouds of grim, sable birds have been floating lazily through the air, skimming over the fields, settling heavily on the branches of withered trees. They sit and wait.

Now for an attack on the wires. An Arctic silence and a sense of great desolation. Faint movements begin in the trench. Someone is putting on a steel helmet; another is looking to his shield: they might be ancient Romans

preparing to sally forth with pikes. Grave, stern faces are scrutinising the bleak territory outside. A corporal and three soldiers emerge wriggling from a little passage; they crawl forth to scout in front of the trench, sheltering themselves in hollows or in holes laboriously dug out.

Presently the Austrians begin to be restless. Long cones of light flash up to the skies and descend slowly to earth, tortuously interrogating the shadows. Some bombs are thrown, some volleys are fired at random. It is time to start. The men who are to blow up the enemy's wires begin their advance.

Each of them has an iron tube filled with gelatine cartridges; it is several feet long and a few inches in diameter. At one end is a rope with a noose, through which the man thrusts his head, dragging the tube after him; at the other end is a fuse whereby the gelatine will be exploded, destroying some four or five yards of wire entanglement.

Once out of the trench, the destroyers fall flat on their faces and wriggle forward, holding their shields before them, with the tubes trailing behind. The first business is to pass through their own wire entanglements, threading troublesome passages, which they have carefully studied for many days. They pause every few inches and their progress seems very slow to those who keep the trench and watch.

A man described to me what he felt when he was engaged upon one of these enterprises for the first time. The night seemed to have a thousand eyes, which saw everything and were proclaiming what they saw. Or else the absolute isolation made him fancy himself the centre of universal life with all nature besetting him and every form of death converging against him.

Indeed, the enemy soon become mysteriously aware that something is afoot, and it rarely happens that destroyers proceed very far without being fired upon. Bullets whistle and reverberate among the rocks and

slither along the ground. Every stone must be seized as cover, and one must lie perfectly doggo, pretending not to be there. Hence the heart-breaking slowness of the advance, with frequent and apparently endless periods of waiting. Hence the ample opportunities for reflecting that perhaps this desperate enterprise will prove all in vain and, even if one does come back, it may be to report that nothing could be done. Often, however, patience is rewarded, the enemy is deceived by the long pauses and believes the attack has been abandoned; but it has probably taken three or four hours to cover seventy or eighty yards.

On reaching the enemy's entanglements, the destroyers begin the most difficult part of their enterprise. Cautiously, imperceptibly they slide forward the tube of gelatine as far as possible under the wires. Now comes the crucial moment. The fuse must be lighted, and the first glimmer of a match will attract a frightful fusillade from the vigilant watchers in the Austrian trenches. Machine-guns mow the ground relentlessly; there is a rain of hand grenades; sharp-shooters are very sharp. Out of five comrades who have reached the goal, two are already incapacitated, but all five tubes must be utilised. Often the wind or driving rain makes success impossible. You may light match after match, each invoking reiterated bombardment, but you cannot light the fuse. Then, apart from the enemy's attentions, you must be very quick to crawl away before your tube explodes.

Still, what a joy when you do return, all drenched and mudded and exhausted; what congratulations, what friendly envy for all you have done and dared!

Now for the narrative of a Venetian named Broston, who set out to wreck wires accompanied by his friend Bazzocca: "Having made sure that my cigar was well alight, I took up the end of a long iron tube, followed by my faithful companion holding the other end. It was pitch dark with a cloudy sky; the wind blew violently

and the ground was a thick black poultice of mud. When we approached the enemy's wires, I strained my eyes towards the left, hoping to make out a heap of white stones where two gelatine tubes were exploded last night, for we were to pass through the gap there to the last entanglement in front of the enemy's trenches. I gave a shake to the tube, this being an agreed signal to tell Bazzocca to stop and lie down, for a very white ray was appearing from the Austrian fort on our right; it flashed across the plain, ran along the wires and trenches, lit up the enemy's little fort in front, then suddenly went out. Ta-ta-ta-ta, ta, ta . . ., ta . . ., ta . . . A machine-gun was at work over there on the left. Pun-tun! Now the Mausers had begun on the other side. Forward! Here are the stones. A little further forward and we can pass on the left. No, we can't; there's a wire. Where are the pincers? By Bacchus, it's tough! . . . Zac! . . . Stop. Keep quiet. Another tug at the tube, meaning lie down. The very white ray is on the prowl again. It disappears and we can breathe again. We wallow forward through the mud, tearing our clothes and skins with stray bits of wire. Here we are at our goal. I whisper to Bazzocca to be off home, and I remain alone, flat on my face in front of the entanglement. Slowly, very slowly I draw the tube along my body, and peer into the wires, looking for a good place for the explosion. I can just make out something of the enemy's trench—unpleasantly close it is with its innumerable loopholes, serried, regular, square, and black. I am still sucking nervously at my cigar but only now realise that it has gone out. That is a nuisance, for the tube is well placed, the fuse is ready, but how am I to light it in this wind? I fumble in my pocket and bring out a box of matches—precious few matches, hang it all! The wind blows them out one after the other. I can hardly believe in my bad luck and remain there, fingering the end of the fuse impatiently. Suddenly there comes a voice from somewhere quite close, a soft, almost apologetic voice,

asking in the purest Venetian, '*Cossa fètu?*' ('What are you doing?') 'Don't you see that I can't light the confounded thing?' I reply serenely: 'Have you got any matches?' But the voice, still polite and conciliatory, replies: 'Go away, I've got a gun.' Then I understand that the voice comes from the enemy's trenches. What am I to do? I am alone and unarmed. If the Austrians come out or shoot, I am done. I am just beginning to think of my last prayers when the voice begins again, more apologetic than ever, almost imploring: 'Go away or I shall have to give you up. Go away. I am a father with a family . . .' So I make up my mind to be off, dragging the tube after me as I have no means of discharging it. I just run as fast as I can, without troubling to stoop or crawl, and when I am safe back in my trench, I give way to fits of nervous laughter."

Seeing how the least light shown by the destroyers may attract the enemy's machine-guns, I imagine Italians must be the most impenitent smokers in the world. A story was told by some prisoners how they watched a party advance with glowing cigars to blow up a wire entanglement. There they were, crawl, crawl, crawling, like glow-worms. At last they were quite close and quite motionless. A volley was delivered without the least effect. The cigars still glowed. A more devastating fire was resumed, all in vain. Then, all of a sudden, much further down, a party of Italians came tumbling into the trench. They had impaled their cigars on the wires and left them to bear the brunt of the bombardment while they crept away in the darkness and attacked elsewhere.

A military authority writes: "The wire entanglement is one of the most important elements of modern war. Whoever succeeds in destroying by some material means the material obstacle which it offers will have relieved war of one of its hardest chains."

Why not electrify our own wires and drench the enemy's with some corrosive acid?



A Mountain Gun

XI. ARTILLERY

One of Disraeli's heroes discovered two nations: the Rich and the Poor. In a similar spirit General February may be said to command two distinct armies.

The original army has gone to ground and suffered a strange change during nine months of war. The spick, grey-green soldiers who formed an indistinguishable part of spring have adapted themselves like chameleons to a rude winter battlefield, with their black faces and mud-sodden rags. On the rare occasions when their fantastic new helmets peer above the soil, they might be gnomes or miners masquerading as crusaders. At the outset, the difficulty was to restrain their impetuosity; their songs and shouts proclaimed their whereabouts, they fired at the least rustle, they wanted to tilt windmills. As for their trenches, any old ditch and a few scraps of brushwood sufficed, defences were a mere matter of the moment; like the Earl of Chatham, Italians were longing to be at 'em. Now they have lived and learned for nine months; the qualities which make them the best navvies in the world have asserted themselves; and the earthworks, though not the permanent fortresses of their more careful foes, come up to the best modern requirements. There are now even second and third rows of trenches in case of accidents, as well as subterranean passages that advance almost into the enemy's burrows. At this season, the Carso is the most difficult of all the battlefields of Europe, and Italian soldiers realise the necessity of calm, heavy, continuous labour, much harder labour, while the bulletins are announcing mere duels of artillery, and coffee-house critics are murmuring over the slowness of the war.

The actual fighting has been left to General February's main army, whose legions are not of flesh and blood but

of steel. Instead of coming to grips and sword-thrusts, they hurtle through the air and deal devastation from afar. They have their own battle-cries, louder and fiercer than those of humans, thunder-talk that makes the mountains quake. While the men retire into the earth like ants or moles, the metal warriors also lurk privily, sending forth invisible squadrons, which you can hear roaring as they charge over miles of valleys and plains. They form a real army, an army of Brobdingnag that reconnoitres, advances and falls, assaults, wounds, kills like men, even digs graves for the foe. Men need more faith and hope and patience and courage; guns win by their relentless strength and pertinacity, like the forces of nature. Men are counted by hundreds and thousands; destroy a few millions of them and a war is ended; but the steel regiments, which batteries send forth to the assault, are innumerable hosts, to which there must be no limit. You may spare your soldiers to fight another day, but there must be no economy of projectiles. For every hour of fighting a man needs two hours of repose; the most heroic brigade in the world would be exhausted after a week of continuous combat. But the steel army never sleeps, never takes furlough, never goes home for week-ends. It is a war of machines that is now being waged among the Italian Alps. You come to forget that men are engaged at all in the campaign, for those at the guns become themselves machines, inconscient instruments obeying orders without knowledge of their purport, mere triggers in the hands of their officers. Theirs but to sight and gear and regulate millimetres and feed and comfort the metal host.

Such is the revolution in warfare. While the importance of infantry has been reduced, that of artillery has been increased out of all proportion. It used to be an auxiliary arm with the humble task of preparing a battle; now it is expected to win the victory. At the same time, it is more recklessly sacrificed. In old days it was su-

premely precious, for cannons were few and difficult to replace. Men gave their lives for it or gained Victoria Crosses, as though it ranked with the flag. It was to be saved at all costs, hurried away as soon as its range was found or it seemed in the least danger. Now (for one reason because it is more difficult to remove) it goes on fighting to the last and its mission is accomplished if it succeeds in saving the infantry. This may sound a contradiction after what I have said about the two armies, but the importance of the metal legions lies in their numbers; we are to be lavish with their lives because there must be no limit to their reserves: it is an adaptation of the Mackensen formation, a subordination of units to results.

All this was explained to me by an Italian officer who is justly proud of his country's artillery. He said the Japanese were the first to continue artillery fire during an advance, and when there was danger of hitting their own side, they extended the range, aiming at the enemy's rear or reserves. This method has been successfully adopted by the Italians during the present war, but not as yet by the Austrians.

I obtained also a clear idea of the development of artillery itself. When field artillery was almost the only kind used, its first task was to silence the enemy's field artillery and only then to assail the infantry. Now there are artillery reserves to take the infantry by surprise when it thinks it is advancing in security. And there is heavy artillery, which must first silence the enemy's heavy artillery, then proceed to destroy the field artillery. Moreover, while field artillery (the French 75 and the German 77) is too small for certain purposes, it has been found too big and heavy for others. For instance, a gun must sometimes be brought to the first line to resist an attack, either in a trench or outside, say 100 yards or less from a wire entanglement or shelter that has to be destroyed; or on the bank of a river in order to attract

the attention and the fire of the enemy while the infantry is crossing. On such emergencies, the 75 has had to be abandoned. The Austrians have adopted a lighter and more mobile gun for such operations at close quarters, with a calibre of 40 or 50 millimetres. Admitting a gun-length of 20 calibres (0.80 to 1 metre), the gun and carriage can be carried by one man with ease and it can be worked by a non-commissioned officer without the need of a battery.

Another important point, which has been impressed upon me by practical soldiers, is that rifles are now out of date and must soon be replaced, at least partially, by machine-guns, on account of their greater rapidity and precision. Rifles are too feeble for defence: bayonet charges have nearly always triumphed over them, whereas they succeed with great difficulty against a line consisting of few men and many machine-guns. One reason of the success of the Germans' resistance has been that, since the beginning of the war, they had two sections of machine-guns per battalion (each section consisting of two guns which fire alternately so as to permit of cooling), whereas for a long time the French had only one section per battalion and not always that. For attacking, both rifles and machine-guns are powerless against modern defences, and they are no longer used during an advance, or used in vain. A rifle's only use in attack is as a handle for a bayonet. It might well be replaced by a steel shield or a good sword.

XII. AVIATION

April 1916

ITALIAN aircraft is only beginning, but it is beginning with true Italian courage and skill. Hitherto it has been limited by the necessary lateness of Italy's entrance into the quarrel and by the climatic conditions of Italian battlefields.

Here, as in France, it remained before the war a graceful sport, not really very dangerous according to a French champion, who told me that motoring was much less safe. Italian airmen excelled in curving and looping and delighting the crowd. When their time came, they were still the equals of Austrians, though that is not very high praise. It is only now with the advent of spring on their icy Alps that they are showing their mettle as military aviators.

Military aviation was introduced to the world by the appearance of a Taube over Paris one August afternoon. While the French, in accordance with their character, had been developing nimble craft, the Germans had thought only of strength and distances and destruction. The Taube was their first-born. It could not soar or show audacity or astonish by acrobatic tricks. But it had a 100 h.p. motor, could afford armour-plate, and could carry fuel as well as munitions for long distances. It went to and fro as though on fixed wires and it was as immune from attack as a hawk among butterflies.

But the butterflies soon took advantage of their lightness and mobility. In other words, the French armed the Morane, their speediest and most agile monoplane, with a machine gun, and aim was taken not with the machine gun, which was fixed, but with the monoplane itself, which

rose above the enemy and put him to confusion. No more Tauben were seen over Paris.

The Germans retorted by increasing their power and speed, improving the motors rather than the aeroplanes. Their Aviatiks and Albatrosses carried 150 h.p. motors at 75 miles an hour, rising 2000 and at last almost 4000 yards in the air, out-classing the Moranes and resuming the slaughter of women and children.

This, however, did not last long. The French reduced the Nieuport from two seats to one and sent it up to bombard the enemy's big craft from below with machine guns in the belly. That was the manœuvre of Pégoud.

The retort to this was the opening of German bellies and the annihilation of assailants à la Pégoud.

The French, however, persisted in opposing the butterfly to the hawk. They reduced the size of their craft again and with only 80 h.p. could make 105 miles an hour anywhere. Again they surmounted the foe and exiled him from their air. They established dense squadrons and, not content with keeping the leviathans at bay, they set out to bombard German bases.

The answer to this was the Fokker, though it meant the abandonment of the heavy tradition. Fokker had been employed in Italy by Caproni, and his machine is only a copy of the Caproni monoplane, fitted with a 200 h.p. motor of the Gnome type constructed by Mercédès. It can travel at 114 miles an hour and fire a machine-gun in every direction. In appearance it is not unlike the Morane, which started sky-chasing for the French.

The appearance of the Fokker is as far as I need go in this quick survey of the ups and downs of aviation since Armageddon, for it coincided with Italy's entry into the fray. The point to remember is that Italy took up her air-war at the moment when the Fokker was the acme of air-craft.

The Austrians adhered to the German school, having long ago abandoned their experimental types, which

had been rapidly out-classed; and they were plentifully supplied with Tauben, Aviatiks, Albatrosses, and Fokkers with the black cross of Prussia painted under their wings, just as they have been supplied with German submarines in exchange for the 305's which they contributed towards Liège, Antwerp, and Verdun.

Italy, then, has had no choice but to abandon all previous theories and take full advantage of the experience whereby France consistently overcame Germany in the air. Italy, moreover, has the advantage over France of being more safely removed from the enemy's aviation bases, though Austria's vital centres are removed still further.

The Franco-Italian defence, then, consists in a blockade and a chase. Take Milan as an example. A blockading squadron of aeroplanes patrols the sky with as many machine guns as possible. At the first alarm of invasion, it is immediately joined by all the craft available in the local aerodromes. During the night there is an elaborate system of signals, indicating even the direction of the wind. Outside this radius, from Treviglio to Vicenza and the valley of the Po, the chasing squadron lurks to prevent the arrival and departure of the enemy. As soon as invasion is notified, it soars to the utmost heights and studies the signals on the ground, long luminous arrows pointing towards the horizon where danger is due. All hurry off like a pack of hounds and fresh signals are constantly displayed to improve their scent.

Artillery has also been greatly developed against aircraft, projectiles with high explosives replacing shrapnel, range and accuracy being improved until the enemy can be hit at a height of over 4000 yards. This has naturally had an important effect upon the creation of new models. Among other consequences, the Austrians have doubled the strength of the Albatross, they can reconnoitre in a hurricane, and communicate by wireless telegraphy. But now in April (in aviation one can only speak of the

immediate present) the civilised Allies have the upper hand with a very small biplane that rises to 2000 yards in 8 minutes, and attains during low flights to 120 miles an hour. Two-seated chase-craft have come into action, capable of firing all round, and huge squadrons fly forth to bombard at 84 miles an hour for non-stop journeys of 360 miles with three men and two machine-guns on board.

Considering all their difficulties, Italian aviators may well be proud of their progress during the period when their machines and experience were still lacking. Indeed, the enemy are the first to express their admiration for the reckless heroism of Italian pilots.

I have heard dramatic accounts of the raid organised upon the fortifications of Laibach in reprisal for the cruel bombardment of Milan and other undefended towns. As the official report announced, the whole squadron returned safely, but that is not to say that there were no casualties. Thus one of the aeroplanes was brought home by the heroism of a wounded pilot with two dead men on board.

A squadron of Capronis rose early one crisp, grey morning, spreading their double wings in the air to take their bearings. On each you could see the helmed heads of the two pilots peering over the white hull, and long, oblong bombs glistened in rows between the wheels. One aeroplane had three men on board, the third being an officer named Salomone, who had volunteered for the sport of the thing. At the last moment a friend brought him an electric warming-pan with talk of thirty degrees of frost, but he laughed it off, saying he expected to find the atmosphere quite hot enough at Laibach.

When they crossed the Isonzo, the enemy began to bombard them. They could not hear the sound of the firing owing to the noise of their own screws, but they saw the little clouds of the shells bursting round them.

Then the snow mountains rolled beneath them with

patches of forest and ribbons of roads and spots of villages.

The enemy let them pass and then attacked some thirty miles from Laibach. In a squadron each aeroplane is protected in its weakest spot by the aeroplane immediately following, so the last is most exposed. Orders cannot be given in the air as on land or sea, besides which there would be no time; all action must be individual, or at least the craft can help each other only on their own impulse of the moment.

The first sight of the enemy was a fast little Fokker that rose without circling, apparently following the slope of the mountain. It passed under the last Caproni with the intention of attacking it.

The last Caproni but one, nearly a mile away, turned round to the rescue, but the other was seen to sail away to the west, apparently uninjured, so the would-be rescuer resumed its course. The noise of the motors and screws had made it impossible to hear the machine-guns or to guess what a drama had been enacted on the aeroplane with the three passengers.

They had first seen their assailant when he was three or four hundred yards below. The volunteer officer stood at the machine gun awaiting a favourable moment to fire. Meanwhile the Fokker had crept behind and risen above the Caproni, volplaned within fifty yards to the left, and discharged her machine-gun obliquely, aiming at the men. The left-hand pilot was wounded at once in the head, but he made a sign to reassure his companions. The Fokker passed under, rose again, and repeated its fire, silencing the right-hand pilot, who was using an automatic gun; meanwhile, the officer at the Caproni's machine-gun dropped his hands, slipped from his seat, and fell in a heap, killed by a shot through the head. The manœuvre was repeated a third time, and the right-hand pilot was finished with a shot through the heart. The left-hand pilot was now the only survivor.

Now the enemy, having exhausted their ammunition, were flying quite close, signalling to him to surrender and go to ground. But he only shook his head.

He was covered with blood, and his companions had fallen so near him that they prevented him from working his machine. With a painful effort he pushed away the dead officer, who remained with his arms hanging over the side; then he had to shift the second pilot with one arm.

His wound was painful. Hot blood streamed out of his helmet all over his face and froze in the wind as he sped through the rarefied atmosphere.

His one thought was to bring his craft back to Italy with the bodies of his friends. All his life was wrapped up in the journey, his whole heart was in the machine. But Italy seemed very far away.

As he approached Gorizia, he saw valleys where it would have been easy to land, and his strength began to give way, but still he flew on. Would the journey never end? It was like the wildest nightmare. At last he saw the fires of the Italian artillery. He crossed the Isonzo and drifted down to some fields.

But the soldiers who hurried to the spot saw no one emerge from the machine. Silent and bloodstained, it seemed to be a phantom airship. The pilot had fainted with his face over his outstretched hands, and the first impulse was to proclaim all the occupants of the craft to be dead.

Meanwhile, the rest of the squadron had proceeded to their destination. Laibach was in great part hidden by light clouds, but a large number of trains could be made out at the station. The Capronis came down to obtain a better view and were received with a storm from the anti-aerial batteries. Gusts of exploding projectiles whirled round the invaders, who retorted with their bombs through the clouds.

Three or four spins round Laibach and then homeward

ho! Then the Caproni which had started last and had witnessed the tragic battle had a violent shock. Something had gone wrong with the centre motor. Fearing it might not be able to rise properly, the craft made off by itself straight for the sea, passed over Trieste at a height of a thousand yards, and fled across the waters pursued by projectiles. When at last they were out of range, the pilots smiled and lit cigarettes.

XIII. THE ENEMY

THERE seems to be a kind of idea in England that we need not really be so angry with the Austrogoths as we are with the Huns. To begin with, they are so far away that they scarcely enter our orbit. In the same spirit I have heard men say that the crimes of Cromwell and Cumberland no longer matter because they happened " so long ago." Distance is always a sedative in respect of place or time; the absent are not always in the wrong, for we can afford to give them the benefit of doubts.

Moreover, the Austrogoths did not invade Belgium because, like a certain Spanish fleet, they were not yet in sight. Then again, we have known many Austrian sportsmen, many charming Hungarian ladies, and we found them very different from the boors of Berlin, the frowsy Hausfraus, the expectorating tourists, who illustrate Kultur. Our press, too, has accustomed us to sneaking sympathies for the aged Emperor, whose life has been one long tragedy, the modern Œdipus, who suffered in silence. I believe it would not take very long to persuade some people that the Austrogoths are more sinned against than sinning, that they were forced into their crime by their big bullying neighbour, that they might be accorded the extenuating circumstances due to a murtherer's half-witted spouse. Many would assent even now to a *nolle prosequi* if the harridan turned civilisation's evidence.

It may, therefore, be well to warn silly sentimentalists that all such thoughts are conceived in ignorance and sin.

Because the Austrogoths have better surface manners than the Huns, it does not follow that they are less barbarous fighters, or that their refinement does not extend to their cruelty. Austria may be more cosmopolitan than Germany, but that does not make her more civilised.

Indeed, Kürnberger justly observed that "what is incomprehensible to every non-Austrian, incomprehensible even to Austrians themselves, is all that is Asiatic in Austria." The crazy quilt of her numerous nationalities may have a certain cheap prettiness as patchwork of many colours, but consists mainly of foul, infectious rags. To appreciate the foulness we need only survey the history or consult the neighbours. That, after all, is the method adopted for investigating credit in private life: how has the man lived and what do they say next door?

Well, Austria has led such a very bad life that the only wonder is so sick a man should take such an unconscionable time to break up; and as for the voice of the neighbours, it is one loud chorus of execration. Italy found Austria a tyrannical intruder, then a treacherous ally; Roumania ran hideous risks of annexation and tells terrible tales of cruel oppression in Transylvania; Serbia was subjected to murtherous plots, commercial paralysis, corrupt intrigues; Bulgaria was undermined with gold as well as dynamite (Stambuloff was a paid agent and many attempts were made to kill Ferdinand); Montenegro suffered relentless persecution for generations.

Other peoples, even the Huns to a certain limited extent, have colonised distant savage lands, imparting white ideas, white habits, gospels as well as fire-water. The Austrian notion of colonisation has been that adopted by David towards Naboth. With nothing to teach and an incapacity for learning even from adversity, Austria struggled, not very successfully, to remove her neighbours' landmarks. In fact, all she has to show for all her criminal efforts is a caricature of colonisation in Bosnia and Herzegovina—barrack hotels in a few chief towns; walks in the neighbouring woods fitted with tin tabernacles whence tourists might conveniently gape at views; some railways to assist an Austrian advance later on; and quite an ingenious system for taxing everybody and everything. In fact, Bosnia was to be the first bite into a colonial

system that should extend right down to the various seas.

It is a mistake to imagine that espionage and atrocities are close preserves of the Huns. They are just as carefully cultivated by the Austrogoths; they are evidently ingrained in the whole Teuton temperament.

I have held in my hands the curved bayonets which can only be withdrawn by ripping up a body. I have seen the effects of their explosive poisonous bullets, which contain fulminate of mercury; these enter a body by a scarcely perceptible hole and come out of a wound four inches in diameter after tearing tendons, muscles, and bones; and lockjaw is a frequent consequence. And here is a report from an Italian military hospital: "One of our wounded showed me an explosive bullet, that had been extracted from his body. The front of the nozzle had been distorted with the utmost precision, so that it terminated in a fringe that had been accurately torn according to the mathematical formula which has cost us many thousands of victims."

And here is another report of another infamy that does not seem to have been charged against the Huns so far: "When we entered B——, one of our officers noticed in the safe of the Austrian headquarters some sealed bottles containing a mysterious, thick, gelatinous liquid with incomprehensible writing on the labels. The bottles were sent to Padua to be examined in the bacteriological laboratory. Then it was found that they contained a culture of typhus bacilli. One of these bottles would have sufficed to poison the waters of the Po and infect the whole city of Turin. Imagine its effect in the slender stream of the Boito, whose water our soldiers drink every day!"

And here is a story to illustrate the criminal ingenuity of the Austrogoths. Four Italians, scouting in the dark, came upon an Austrian outpost. One of them crept up, hoisted a tricolour flag over a tent, and succeeded in carrying off a bottle of brandy as a souvenir. Next day

a lieutenant was met on his way to the carpenter's. "I am off to order four crosses," he said, "for four of our men who suddenly fell down dead while they were charging the enemy's lines. No shot had been fired, but it appears that they drank a bottle of the enemy's brandy."

This only amounts to circumstantial evidence, but finds corroboration in another incident. When they retreated from Gradisca, the Austrians left some hundreds of cigarettes, all neatly done up in tin boxes. The soldiers were for smoking them, but their officers persuaded them to wait, and analysis proved that the cigarettes had been poisoned. It is also reported that boxes of poisoned chocolates were dropped in Milan and other towns from raiding aeroplanes.

Austrians single out hospitals and ambulances for special bombardment, not respecting the Red Cross even when they know it flies over their own wounded countrymen. When they do not fire on ambulances, they deliberately bombard the roads in front of them with shells of medium calibre so that the wounded may not be conveyed to hospital.

In the matter of treachery, they beat all the records of the Choctaws. They may not use pocket-handkerchiefs, but I warrant every one of them has a white flag in his pouch. Holding up their hands must never be mistaken for surrender: it is an openly admitted device for silencing the enemy and luring him on to his death—in fact, as lawful a sport as attracting birds with decoys.

Nor is their treachery restricted to the heat of the moment, as the following incident will show:—In the Plava region, three Italian medical officers went out with four ambulance men, attracted by the cries of the wounded. They were soon surrounded by Austrian patrols, which were largely composed of Red Cross men. An agreement was made that each party should attend to the wounded without molestation, and presently two of the Italian ambulance men returned to camp. The others,

however, did not follow, so an officer was sent out to parley, accompanied according to rule by a trumpeter, a drummer, and a white flag. But neither he nor his companions nor the two other ambulance men have ever been seen again.

Perhaps the worst form of cruelty has been the employment of brigands in the districts which the Austrians evacuated. All the scum of the population and desperadoes from other parts of the patchwork empire are suborned to hang about and commit outrages. They hide in the woods and shoot isolated officers or convoys or surgeons tending the wounded, or even the wounded themselves. They also lurk in farms or town-houses and fire at troops from the windows. This, according to all laws of war, would justify stern reprisals on the population, and that is no doubt what the Austrians seek to provoke. But the Italians are conducting their war with such an excess of chivalry that they are not likely to fall into any such trap, especially as the population is more or less of their own flesh and blood.

In this connection, it may be interesting to make a short survey of the " unredeemed " provinces for which Italy is fighting. The Friuli district, for instance, would have been suspected by any but a confiding army.

For generations we have been accustomed to the bitter cry of Trent, Trieste, Istria, Fiume, Zara, for emancipation, but Friuli was dumb; Friuli served only for statistical purposes, to swell the list of Italians under Austrian rule. Friuli has long feudal traditions, and has been honeycombed with Austrian emissaries: (1) noble landowners, (2) clergy, and (3) Government officials. These had the electoral and administrative machinery in their hands and carried on a continuous propaganda, denouncing the poverty and emigration of Italians, the worthlessness of their army, their banking and commercial scandals, their heavy taxes on salt, sugar, coffee, and other prime necessaries of life. Even the local Socialists from the

factories ran down Italian military expenditure and favoured Austria. The result was that the peasants, respecting (like most peasants) force, religion, tradition, and wealth, learned to regard themselves as Austrians; though they still spoke an Italian dialect, they used it to say, "*Io soi todesc*" (I am German).

When the Austrians withdrew from Friuli they took all the able-bodied men away to serve in the army or to go to concentration camps; they warned such as remained that Italians would commit atrocities and that Austrians would return to punish any who welcomed the invaders. Accordingly, the emancipators found few flags put out and most windows shut. Those who understood the conditions of Friuli were quite content with their reception, but it disgusted superficial warriors, who imagined all unredeemed Italy to be one enthusiastic province, had hazy geographical ideas of Trent and Trieste on two sides of a river with a bridge between. The suspicions have not been justified, for the population has proved quietly sympathetic, and such of it as has been afforded refuge in various parts of Italy is learning to appreciate the mildness of Italian rule. Peasants are rarely revolutionary. Garibaldi said he never found a single peasant among his volunteers, and the Friuli peasants are just like other Italian peasants. They would never have shaken off the Austrian yoke themselves, but they are already learning to appreciate their liberation.

Meanwhile, however, the Austrians exposed them to grave risks by letting loose brigandage in their midst. Think how a Hun army of occupation would have treated suspect villagers when sniping was frequent among their woods. The fact is, the Austrogoths may be inferior fighters to the Huns, but they are certainly better diplomatists.

Their great problem has been to deal with their unwilling soldiers. It was all very well to send Istrians to fight the Serbians and Croatians to fight the Italians.

But when Istrian and Croatian sympathies were on the civilised side, there were sometimes reservations about sacrificing their lives for King and Country—a hated despot and an alien land.

I am always hearing about the Bishop of Trieste's butler. The Austrians pressed him and rigged him out as a warrior and hurried him off to the front. He spent all his time in the trenches praying every Saint in the kalendar to make him a prisoner of war, and he was far too much frightened to fire. One day he was driven out to charge. All of a sudden he felt a severe pain in the small of his back. Mamma mia! What a terrible, inglorious wound! He was about to commend his soul to his Maker, when he happened to turn round and discovered the nature of his misadventure—a violent kick from an officer to stimulate his zeal. The Saints were a long time before they hearkened to his prayers. Then at last a bersagliere leaped upon him, took him by the throat, and bade him give up his arms. " Lord bless you," he replied in the purest Venetian, " I threw them away ages ago and have only been waiting for you to come and take me."



Two Engineer Officers
Reconnoitring



A Difficult Pass

XIV. CAPTIVES

THERE is a fine Gregorian roll about Prisoners and Captives, but the phrase is redundant, as often happens in poetry. Moreover, prisoners suggest Old Bailey, Sykes, ignominy, whereas captives of war are often heroes and have always commanded respect in civilised lands, still find it even among the Turks. It is only among the modern Roundheads (*Boche* is new French for Roundhead) that they are deliberately condemned to die of typhoid fever.

The Austrogoths, however, run the Huns very close. They have shot captives who refuse to build trenches and make munitions to be used against their own people, and their idea of discipline has often been expressed in terms of torture akin to crucifixion.

Here is the report of an Italian captive, Antonio Sgroi of Catania, who returned from an Austrian concentration camp:

"There were perhaps 4000 of us packed away there, about half of them Italians."

"What did they give you to eat?"

"It is terrible to think of. Four times a week, we had a filthy soup made of boiled flour without even a drop of oil in it. They treated us like pigs and we were addressed as 'Pigs!' all the time by the soldiers. 'Italian pigs!' they used to say between an oath and a spit. They said it in Croatian, but some one always translated in case we had not understood."

"Did you have bread?"

"Very little. Hard and wooden at first; then even that was abolished."

"How did the gendarmes treat you?"

"There were no gendarmes. There were only soldiers

who guarded the concentration camp. The internal police-service was performed by a body of Russians and Serbians; it included some Italians, too, and they were the most ferocious, the most infamous, hirelings body and soul. I remember a certain Gallina, a Venetian, as cruel and perverse as a Jew; he would have made even an Austrian policeman blush for his infamies."

"But could you not complain to any official?"

"We used sometimes to complain to the commander of the camp, Count von Salandra."

"Salandra! Like the Italian Prime Minister?"

"Yes, von Salandra, an Austrian lieutenant of dragoons. The coincidence of the name had given us some sort of vague hope, but we soon found that von Salandra was worse than any of his myrmidons. He never interfered once to prevent any of the outrages or infamies which were committed every day. How many poor wretches died in consequence of the ill-treatment they received! And how many days were we left absolutely fasting! On the 18th and 19th of August, on the occasion of the Emperor's birthday, we were given nothing at all to eat. They left us without food so that we should not fail to remember the occasion, and meanwhile the soldiers made themselves drunk with beer. On the 20th of September (the anniversary of the taking of Rome) some Italians boldly defied the vigilance of the soldiers and attempted a patriotic demonstration. In several barracks, there were cheers for Italy and King Victor Emmanuel. The soldiers came in a great hurry, armed to the teeth, to suppress the 'revolt.' There was a fierce chase all through the barracks. All the Italians were driven out with the butt-ends of guns and the points of bayonets. A sergeant, a renegade from the Trentino, proved most relentless of all. He roared like a wild beast, knocking the women and children about and demanding to know who had cheered for Italy. All of a sudden, while everybody else remained silent, one of the captives stepped forward in front of the soldiers and

cried with a ringing voice, in which one could recognise the patriotic ardour of his soul, ' Well, it was I who cheered for Italy.' He was stretched out on the spot by the sergeant with two revolver-shots, by that bloody wild beast . . ."

Now contrast the condition of captives in Italy. Here is a letter published by the *Berliner Tageblatt* from an Austrian soldier taken by the Serbians at Nish and handed over to the Italians at Valona. After describing the horror of his journey through Serbia and Albania, he says: " At Valona we were put on board an Italian steamer and our sufferings were at an end. The kind care shown us restored our health and spirits. When we landed in Sardinia, we proceeded to the camp which had been assigned to us. Our appearance caused a painful impression. Passing through Italian territory, we saw women and even men moved to tears as soon as they beheld us. Children fled from us in fear, for we were scarecrows. We reached our destination with torn boots, some of us really bare-foot, with ragged clothes, and reduced to skin and bones; some hundred of us arrived, the others having died during the terrible journey. Here we are in lovely spring-time; all nature is green; the oranges are blooming and the sun pours its beneficent rays on our weary bodies."

Much curiosity was aroused one night in the public square of Portoferraio by a very unexpected sight. A number of Austrian officers in full uniform were strolling about quite unperturbed. They laughed and chatted and ogled and visited bars for all the world as though they formed part of an army of occupation. It was only on close inspection that one detected that they wore little tricolour cockades. They proved to be Italians from the unredeemed provinces, forced into the Austrian ranks, deserters at the first opportunity. They were brought to Elba as prisoners and were soon released on condition that they did not leave the island.

There was, however, one real prisoner in the barracks

when I arrived, an aviator who did some damage on the Adriatic coast. The commandant took me up to see him as he paced silently up and down the terrace with a guard. I asked if he was satisfied with his treatment and he growled that he would like a bigger bedroom. That was the only complaint he could think of. The commandant said he would have far more liberty if he would only give his parole not to escape. I asked the prisoner why he did not give it, as there was no possible chance of escape from Elba unless he had the facilities of Napoleon. He replied sulkily that Austrian officers never give a parole. He told me he was a Hungarian, but when I talked Hungarian to him, he could not reply. I asked him at least to say something in Hungarian, but he only shrugged his round shoulders. He had a villainous face and shifty eyes, rather a mad look sometimes—a young man running to fat. He said he had a brother in England, who was probably fighting on our side, and he begged me to find him, if I went home, and give a good report. As he gave me no address and I do not even know his name, the commission will not be easy to execute. People here blame me for having shaken hands with the enemy when I left him; but I always feel sorry for prisoners and captives.

Elba is, of course, an obvious place for the confinement of captives, and several consignments arrived during my stay. The bulk of them were housed in Buonaparte's Mulini Palace and its appurtenances, the Bee Hotel (the best, or at least the most expensive in Portoferraio) being paid to cater for them. The usual guests of the hotel soon complained that they could get neither food nor attention because all were lavished on the captives. I used to see about two hundred of the captives nearly every afternoon from my window or during my walks when they were taken out for a couple of hours' exercise. They were marched in fours with some forty Italian soldiers preceding them and as many

bringing up their rear. Some of the captives were elderly, with white whiskers, and they usually marched in solitary state; most were quite young; nearly all were merry. They chatted briskly among themselves and with such guards as lined up with them. They smoked cigarettes and laughed and looked up at the windows in search of pretty faces, and they would sometimes pull a small boy's ear or indulge in some other friendly familiarity as they passed. The population stared stolidly at them, as they do at all strangers, but did not jeer or scowl. The uniforms were mostly of blue cotton. Many wore flowers. They seemed healthy and brisk, but did not keep good step. I believe they had all sorts of comforts and luxuries. I know, when I inquired about borrowing books from the public library, I was told it ought not to be difficult for me as the captives were allowed to borrow what they pleased.

An educated reservist at Capri told me he had been looking after the Austrian prisoners at Baronissi, in the salubrious hills behind Salerno, where they were quartered in an old monastery. There were 184 privates, some non-commissioned officers and 11 officers. The soldiers and officers never exchanged conversation and were all amazed at the familiarity between Italian officers and soldiers. The prisoners had coffee in the morning, soup and meat and macaroni for meals, a quarter of a litre of wine twice a week, baths, bedclothes changed twice a month, walks every day to the great fatigue of their guards, games of bowls, wrestling and gymnastics,—altogether far better treatment than Italian soldiers. When their boots wore out, they had new ones at once, not even military boots, but the best civilian material, also new coats at once as soon as they were in the least frayed, whereas Italian soldiers had to patch up their old things. No work to do and the best of climates, so they soon grew grossly fat. There had never been the least insult to any prisoner in Italy, and my informant

would scarcely believe me when I related how I had seen the mob of Marseilles stoning convoys of prisoners on their way from the station. I asked if the prisoners were grateful and he said yes, but even more surprised by such treatment, as they had imagined Italians were of an inferior civilisation. He was proud that Italians should show their superior humanity to the Huns. What tickled him most was the prisoners' inability to understand one another. A Neapolitan had to be brought in to interpret for Hungarians, Bosnians, Dalmatians, etc. And the Austrian officers were annoyed at the confession of ignorance of their subject races. Italians of the Trentino are not obliged to learn German and naturally they don't. The prisoners were constantly receiving letters and parcels, and the Spanish ambassador rolled his eyes when he saw the comforts. He is the protector of the Austrian prisoners and goes round to inspect. My informant thought Italian prisoners received their parcels from home, but a woman who was present at our conversation interjected that she had heard of cases to the contrary. The great need of Italian prisoners in Austria is bread and they are always asking for parcels of rolls, specially cooked so as not to get stale during the journey. The Austrian prisoners were supplied with too much bread and threw most of it away. This is the first soldier I have found talking freely, and I suspect he was violating the letter of his regulations.

When we were small boys and read of Surajah Dowla's hosts (or the Great Mogul's or somebody's) exciting themselves with bhang before they went into battle, we used to think what dreadful savages to meet on a dark night; whereas it only meant that they got drunk—just like the Austrogoths. And bhang sounded like explosive bullets, which the Austrogoths use too. Almost every Italian soldier will tell you of the drunken attacks when the enemy comes rolling down the Carso slopes in serried fours, offering the best of all possible targets in the moon-

light, such targets that, when they awake from their cups in the morning, they are, like certain Assyrians, all dead men, dead men lying on the hillside in columns of corpses. And the prisoners betray drunkenness by speech and voice and breath. The odd thing is that, with food supplies so scanty that they always go hungry to battle, the mongrel hordes of Austria never lack ample supplies of schnaps or slivovits. It is not that they require Dutch courage, for, to give the dogs their due, they fear nothing except cold steel, and that they are now learning to stomach. I suppose they need some nourishment and find liquids more portable; or, perhaps, fuddling reconciles consciences to atrocities.

I must have seen thousands of captives while in Italy, all with different mannerisms according to their race: fierce, sullen Hungarians, resenting the humiliation at first; stupid, bewildered Bohemians, nodding and saluting incessantly, like puppets on strings; demonstrative Bosnians, struggling to kiss their captors in gratitude for gifts of bread and cheese.

Here are a few anecdotes:

On the 22nd October 1915, a wounded Austrian officer was being led off from a captured trench, pale and silent. An Italian surgeon-captain asked him how many men there were on the other side of the hill. The captive bared his breast theatrically and pointed to the Italian's revolver, as though to say, " Kill me, but I will not tell." The surgeon at once embraced him and kissed him, a form of demonstration not unusual when Italians are deeply moved.

An Italian officer, storming an Austrian trench, seized one of the enemy by the collar and told him to surrender. The other fired and wounded him slightly in the face. The officer then shot him through the skull and he was carried off to be tended in the Italian trenches. His bearers had to take him along a narrow mountain path where it was necessary to cling to ropes, and the cerebral matter

was oozing out of his wound. A surgeon appeared and bandaged him as best he could. Then a chaplain came and tried to talk to him, but the man understood neither Italian nor German. In order to seek some clue to his identity, the chaplain put his hands into the man's pocket and found a purse with twenty kronen, but as he found nothing else he put back the purse and money. Then the man, grievously wounded as he was, almost dying, made a convulsive movement with his hand, drew out the purse, opened it, and counted the twenty kronen one by one, gazing with his one unbandaged eye upon the one thing that still interested him more than his life or his soul. He was conveyed to hospital and died two days later. Through a strange feeling of respect for what were evidently his last wishes, he was buried with his twenty kronen in his pocket.

Captives taken in Austrian trenches are nearly always in a filthy and verminous state, and the smell of them baffles description. Their officers above the rank of captain never enter the trenches at all if they can help it.

XV. THE WINTER'S WORK

"THE Sanitary Section," wrote a descriptive reporter, "remained last on the field, to deal with the only remaining enemies—winter and snow." And they have been stubborn fighters, those two, with their blows below the belt of zero, paralysing and prostrating heroes from Libyan tropics or Sicilian lemon groves, making more victims perhaps than the hottest fire, supplying the word "Frozen" as a fresh heading for casualty lists. Winter is not so terrible, one hears, so long as it is possible to keep moving, but winter quarters are more trying than a winter campaign.

Still, nothing has been neglected in the way of winter equipment. First, to make defence impregnable, the trench walls were cemented, armoured shelters excavated out of the rocks, outlooks and observatories fashioned with earth-sacks in natural redoubts.

The next thought was for housing. All possible advantage was taken of existing constructions with the least disturbance to the population. These resources, however, were not great owing to systematic destruction of villages by the Austrians. So the chief effort has been directed to building barracks, which extend for tens of miles and are of every type, shape, and size, of bricks, cement, and double walls of wood. For bedding, there are straw mattresses on trestles raised above the ground, or sailors' hammocks near the roof, and some units have bunks in tiers. To give an idea of the laborious provision, I may mention that 300,000 tables had to be sent to one army corps in the mountains, a third of them on the backs of animals and finally of men. For supplying tables and blocks of cement, it was necessary to start hydraulic sawmills, furnaces, and factories.

General February's chief lieutenants being cold and damp, stoves of all sorts have been provided, besides foot-warmers, hand-warmers, breast-warmers, hot bricks wrapped in flannel, even hot-water bottles for the pocket. And the men keep each other warm, with a clean healthy warmth, sweetened by regular ablutions. At first, soldiers' letters were full of the limitations of trench-life; this was a typical account: "I have come to look like a brigand. My tunic is in rags and I have nothing to wear on my head. I am filthy beyond words, covered with mud up to the roots of my hair." Now there are baths everywhere near the villages of barracks, with hot and cold douches and sterilising stoves; laundries too; frequent disinfection with antiseptic washing; a profuse sprinkling of insect-powder. Within the limits of the enemy's scanty humanity, battlefields have also been disinfected and scavenged, bodies removed to regimental cemeteries.

And the modern priestcraft has been very busy, perhaps too busy, with prophylactics. Anticholera vaccination has been imposed on every soldier in the army. Many had already endured antityphus inoculation, which has more serious reactions. Some have a mixed cholera and typhus vaccine at intervals of seven days with the ordinary small-pox stuff thrown in to fill up intervals of time. Only in the case of men suffering from serious illness could a respite be obtained. I have no means of telling what the results have been, for of course the medical fraternity is always optimistic about its lucrative nostrums. At any rate, maladies of the eyes, teeth, and skin seem to have been well cared for, and I am told frostbite has now almost entirely disappeared.

This may be due to the lavish distribution of blankets and flannel underclothes, hoods, cloaks, comforters, skin-lined capes, chest-protectors, sleeping-socks, and water-proof overshoes after their kind. Even fats for anointing the skin have been supplied.

Men as well as trenches have been fortified against the

elements. From mud-stained moles they have developed into penguins or Arctic bears or ghosts or Fathers Christmas, affording another of the chameleon transformations of war. There was khaki for dissembling in the sands of South Africa, grey-green to confuse with vegetation, blue-green for marines; now comes white among the fields of snow. As a matter of fact, I am told the good old British red remains least visible of all beyond a certain distance.

Food is now varied and abundant, and there have been scientific calculations about calorics to suit the rations to the various climates. For instance, rum and marsala supplement red wine at a sufficient elevation. Bread was at first made in camp-stoves, but there has been a gradual substitution of brick ovens, and the smell of the bakeries is as fragrant as anywhere in Lombardy or the West of England. The army has been specially proud of its bread all through, and its excellence is supposed to be one of the chief inducements for the enemy to surrender. Soldiers' letters are full of references to it. "We made ever so many prisoners," one writes, "and they were quite pleased when we offered them our bread, which they said was like snow compared with theirs."

Special efforts are also made for a constant supply of hot meals by means of thermos, ox-fat stoves, paper and wax heaters, solidified alcohol. There are deposits of fuel and provisions in the most advanced posts. Even the difficulty about water has been overcome: it is now laid on in thirsty regions like the Carso, where nature provides none. And there is an abundance of Bürkefeld filters.

Pot-luck is necessarily precarious at the outposts, but with luck it is not impossible to find a fowl in the pot.

"Has it flown up here?" you ask impertinently.

"Nonsense," the officer replies, a little hurt at the slur on his larder, "this is almost a game-preserve. Why, the other day, I killed a chamois and we have put away most of it in wine for our Christmas dinner. I would offer you

a glass of wine now, only it has all been frozen to a solid mass."

The work of the Army Service Corps is varied and endless amid the snow. Roads have to be kept clear with far greater vigilance than on the plains. Then there is the provision of sledges, stakes for indicating tracks, ice-hooks for climbers, shelters and their stoves, fuel for those stoves, stores for months and months up there.

For months and months, indeed, Alpini have been carrying up provisions in their arms and on their backs. Sometimes this was quite a desperate enterprise. A man would lose his balance on the hem of a precipice and be dashed to bits, or an avalanche would sweep a whole caravan of climbers to eternity.

One effect of the winter's work has been to develop the scanty railways of the war-zone. Where short trains could just be dragged up by a couple of asthmatic engines, gradients have been improved, lines doubled and trebled, new systems called into being. The railways now carry millions of tons of material as far as Calalzo in the Cadore, as far as Gemona, Carina station, and Villa Santina in Carnia. These are all dumped into the valleys and committed to infinite motors, carts, horses, mules, and oxen that wind up the roads and river-beds and mountain-tracks with a tumult of horns and bells and hoofs and harness. Droves of lowing, bleating beasts supply fresh melody on their way to distant slaughter-houses; there are snatches of song among the pines; snow-ploughs effervesce among the mists.

The further you go, the more primitive the procedure. Take yourself, the recording angel. First you go to Brescia or some other base and attend banquets, where high officers will deliver glowing speeches. Then you proceed to the front with ever decreasing luxury—by rail to begin with, then by motors of many horse-power, then in little climbing cars, then on horseback, then on mule-back, then on foot, finally on all fours.



Vedette in the First Line in an Ice Grotto excavated at 2,300 metres high



Vedette of the First Line in a Trench

In the same spirit, the material which has reached the hills is taken from carts or sledges and loaded on the backs of mules or men to wriggle up the rudest tracks, or is whisked up by teleferic wire to forbidding peaks, apparently travelling all by itself. What a strange sensation it must have been for simple villagers to gaze up above their belfries and descry processions of packing-cases, trusses of hay, barrels of wine, carcasses of meat, all passing placidly through the air. But now the novelty has long worn off.

It would be interesting to know how many thousands of leagues of wire are required for a campaign. Apart from traction, they are needed everywhere for communications. For very much depends on the observatories which are poised in all sorts of incredible coigns of vantage, sometimes as far as 9000 feet up in the air, and they, in their turn, depend on their telephones. To defend a single observatory is often more important than to win several battles, for it directs the fire of dozens and dozens of guns. The wire which joins a battery to its observatory is like an optic nerve; if anything happens to it, the battery goes blind. Then a couple of men must creep through the night and the storm for miles along precipices until they find and remedy the damage and the battery's vision is restored. Each observatory is known familiarly by the metres of its height, and in conversation you hear of ringing up Two-six-o-nine or Twenty-five-fifty as though they were telephone numbers, which they also are. Telephones, too, are of vast importance for keeping a command in touch with an Alpine battalion on the march.

The winter war has been responsible for the discovery of a new weapon of offence. It appears that avalanches have made almost daily victims, especially in March. Experience and vigilance are of little avail, for the avalanches form suddenly, accumulating near the least accessible peaks, then bearing down with slow, inexorable

pressure upon the high shelters, and suffocating human groans under their white shrouds. On a calm day the soldiers hear the howl of the masses of snow dislodging themselves, and some sort of alarm can be raised; but more often the avalanche hurls itself down in the fury of the tempest and there is no warning of its advent. The swiftness and completeness of its charge suggested the production of artificial avalanches. Observing that the vibrations caused in the air by cannons and shells often dislodged masses of snow, the Italians began to fire at such masses as could easily be pitched upon the enemy's trenches and buildings. This game proved to be one after the Austrians' hearts and they soon developed it on a large scale. So now one has to keep a sharp look-out for apparently aimless shots fired at snowy cliffs, and the artificial avalanche is found very effective against " dead corners " that cannot be reached by cannonades.

XVI. THE SECOND SPRING CAMPAIGN

LOUD laughter greeted the kalendar's incredible announcement that spring had come. The thermometer gave it the lie of an expert witness. But the Austrians took it seriously.

On Saint Joseph's Day, March 19, they had celebrated the onomastic feast of that strange saint, Francis Joseph, by a tremendous bombardment across the snows. Ten thousand shots were fired and there was scarcely a scratch to show for them. One wound for every 800 shells is the official report. The verdict was: What extravagant fireworks! As a matter of fact, there was much method in the madness.

Let us first remember that the old Austrian plan was to walk into Friuli by the Pass of Montecroce and take the Isonzo army in the rear. Konrad and the murdered archduke worked very hard at this plan. Next to the Pass of Montecroce comes the loaf-shaped Pal Piccolo (Little Pal); then Freikofel and Pal Grande (Big Pal) with the Pass of the Horse (where no horse ever passed) as the saddle in between. The Italians installed themselves in trenches at both Pals by dint of acrobatics during the winter, with the Austrians 40 yards in front of them, as well as at the Pass of the Horse.

Little Pal is an unfriendly knot of peaks over 6000 feet above the sea. It snowed there incessantly from the middle of February to the middle of March, and both sides ceased firing, for the shells would not burst on the soft surface. There was only one wire entanglement between them, and it was completely buried. Frisian horses had been thrown out, but no one dreamed of an attack over the snow, which was eight yards deep and would have swallowed up men like a quicksand.

The big bombardment of Saint Joseph's Day had, however, served its purpose. Under cover of the din, the Austrians had burrowed through the snow and the wire entanglements. On the evening of March 25, much shouting and singing was noticed in the Austrian trench. This was unusual, for the enemy usually maintain the most sinister silence, leaving all gaiety to the Italians. Perhaps they were celebrating Lady Day or cheering some mendacious proclamation? As a matter of fact, they were elated because they felt sure of success, and their plan was certainly good enough to warrant it.

At 3.30 a.m. on the morning of the 26th they emerged from their tunnels with shields and portable machine-guns. They were all dressed in white and resembled phantoms in the vague light on the snow. They had no difficulty in surprising the sentinels, whom they proceeded to massacre, binding their wrists with wire, then hammering them over the head with the butt-ends of their rifles. In a few minutes the whole Italian trench, one of the biggest and finest works of military art in the Alps, was flooded as though by a torrent of water. It was soon reorganised with fresh snow-trenches towards the next Italian line, and plenty of machine-guns to ward off a counter-attack.

Nothing could be retrieved all through the long day of the 26th in spite of desperate attempts. The Italian officers, as usual, led their troops to the attack with the result that in many places there was no one left to command. At one place two subalterns were mowed down by the same machine-gun and embraced before they died.

At 1 p.m. a new plan of action was tried—digging tunnels in the snow—but only three men could work in them at a time and after two hours it was realised that days would be needed. At midnight the attempt to recover Little Pal seemed hopelessly beaten, and the next would be still more difficult.



Austrian Shelters on the Carso after a Bombardment

At one o'clock a rumour came that the Highlanders were attacking the Austrians on the left, some with rackets on their feet, others with snow up to their breasts. What one could see of the mountain suggested a troubadour with a thick white cloak flung voluptuously over his left shoulder.

It was a cinder-dawn. Far away on the left, a few little figures could be made out, crawling under the Austrian parapet with bags of bombs. One stooped and raised a ladder and crawled up so slowly that the watchers grew impatient. Another followed him with a reserve of bombs. The Austrians were firing away, solemnly, drowsily, unconsciously, a foot or two above their heads. Then there was a sudden scrimmage amid spluttering snow and some sort of a position seemed to have been taken.

Those who consulted the watches on their wrists saw it was 8 a.m. Simultaneously, perhaps incidentally, a great shout of resurrection rang along the Italian lines through hills and vales from the night-marchers, an inspiration of victory in the pale gloaming far above the world: "Savoy! Savoy!"

There was a great attack with bombs. You saw men hurling bombs with all the serene satisfaction of a discobolus. It was a primeval fight, all hand to hand. Men banged each other's faces with stones. The wounded rolled away into the valley locked in each other's arms. There was a telephonist picking up Austrian bombs before they exploded and casting them back whence they came. If they were too numerous, he flung himself on his face to wait for their explosion, then popped up in the smoke to begin again.

At ten in the morning the Italian troops were swarming up in serried clusters, the surer-footed Highlanders choosing the way and helping others on with their hands. There were bersaglieri from Sicily with bare bayonets gleaming between their teeth.

The enemy, despite ghastly losses, did not give way. One result of the long winter of their discontent is that they have found their courage. At first it was all: "The Austrians will not face steel." Now everybody admits that they quit themselves like men. As an Italian officer remarked, "They are fed like pigs, but they fight to the death."

They peered over the parapet to take better aim, and the Italians, who can never forgo a joke even in the pant and sweat and fever of a death-rattle, called out, "Do look at their heads; aren't they just like black melons?" And indeed they were—shaven, voluminous, grotesque silhouettes, bobbing about like parcels of toy balloons. At very close quarters, they were horrible as well as absurd, for they had gas-masks and such hoods as men wear in the hands of the hangman.

Just at the moment of victory a strange portent appeared in the sky, darkening the dingy air, flapping huge wings with the Italian tricolour, drawing nearer and nearer with wide circles amid cloudlets of Austrian shrapnel. Italian pilots were waving from an Italian aeroplane, defying the wild fusillades of the enemy.

Men laughed in the intoxication of triumph as they forced their way over the parapet and slipped and fell and died in the final charge, and every dead face had a smile of glory in its endless sleep.

A cloud of greenish gas was let loose, but kind winds bore it away to the valleys.

The trench was deep with corpses; only a few Austrians continued to fire obstinately. Soon there was only one, an odd-looking Bosnian with a ring in his right ear. He was pulling away at a machine-gun. "Stop it," one cried, "that gun is ours." Then without a word he flung it away to be swallowed up by the snow. Then he surrendered.

More snow began to float down upon the dead and upon the bloody, trampled snow, spreading a fleecy shroud

with all the solemn majesty of Nature, inviting bowed heads and prayers and requiems. But a merry bersagliere was collecting white powder in the palms of his hands, moulding it, and looking about him with an odd look in his eye. Soon snowballing became general.

. . . . . .

A prisoner had said that the capture of Little Pal by the Austrians constituted the finest high mountain operation in military history. It was certainly a fine exploit, though due to subterfuge, but the triumph of its recapture by force in the open against every resistance of man and mountain was infinitely finer.

The Austrians had made a simultaneous attack on Big Pal, probably as a mere diversion, for it was attempted in the open and easily repulsed. Indeed, it led to the Italians taking the Pass of the Horse, described by a rhetorical journalist as " fighting in the glaucous shadow of crystalline, diaphanous grottoes, bending under low irregular vaults hirsute with stalactites of ice, lost in fabulous labyrinths of pallid reflections of marine depths, far from the day, far from the world."

This affair illustrates the importance of inches in high mountain warfare. A machine-gun in a ditch can keep back a regiment. The loss of a redoubt means the loss of a mountain. A slip or the missing of a foothold is not only an individual but a general disaster. Whereas in the plains the loss of a position does not make a whole plan crumble.

In the recapture of the last six yards of Little Pal, there was a struggle of several hours which even in that bloody region had not been equalled. The Austrian surprise of a front forty yards long might have had incalculable effects. If the enemy had not been dislodged, they would have remained masters of a great extent of the valley; the Italians would have had thousands of invaders within their gates. A simultaneous Austrian success at Big Pal might have meant months of dogged fighting all along a much

wider front. In fact, a handful of men on a peak are not like a handful of men on a plain. They are at once smaller and bigger. The mountains dwarf them but raise them up.

And one result of the long winter's wait is that the very lowlanders and hotlanders are acquiring Highland craft. Some of the most successful troops at Little Pal had been bred at Palermo; even ex-officials of Customs climbed like acrobats. A new model army is emerging for the second spring campaign.

XVII. THE AUSTRIAN RAID

June 1916

To understand the Austrian aggression, we need only imagine a pair of compasses with the angle at Trent, stretch one arm along the Adige and the other along the Brenta, then gradually narrow the angle until one point touches Arsiero and the other Asiago. That is how the Austrian army was pinched in. The base of this new triangle then forms the bulwark where the Italians defended the plain of Vicenza and drove back the enemy by one of the finest and pluckiest exhibitions of mountain warfare.

The battlefield was a sloping table-land some 3250 feet above the level of the sea, an emerald shell full of fat walled pastures and woods. None were safe there who did not possess the dominating peaks. A pretty, smiling country of green, luminous, vaporous streams, deep dark gullies flecked with little white villages, variegated hills. An orchestra of crickets chirped in an atmosphere of new-mown hay, to be succeeded by the smoke of battle, the drench of blood, the roar of heavy artillery in a warm wind that bore the bitter-sweet odour of death.

In Napoleon's copy of Guibert's book on Tactics, which I found in the library at Elba, was a marked passage to the effect that an army's greatest strength is to be found in its legs. If for legs we substitute the modern counterpart of mobility, the Italian army can claim to be unsurpassed. In this rough region a few days sufficed to turn mule tracks into carriage-roads and whole regiments were rushed up in long files of motors. Not a moment was lost anywhere.

Not a provision was neglected. It is a thirsty district,

where no water is, so nearly half a million litres of the precious liquid were brought up every day in motor cisterns. Even the distribution of letters never failed. The best armies are those with the best service corps.

During the Somme fighting, the appearance of cavalry was reported as an extraordinary event, but here in such a steeplechase country it seemed almost uncanny, and the enemy could not believe their ears when they heard galloping hoofs among their pursuers. Cycles, which are to bersaglieri what horses are to Centaurs, also performed prodigies.

Here is an incident at a tight corner. Some gunners have fixed their bayonets for a last tussle against overwhelming odds: unless relief comes, they are all dead men. It does come, in the very nick of time. A battalion of bersaglieri whirls up on the left in a cloud of dust, they throw their cycles on the ground, fall upon the Austrians with wild cries of "Savoy!" and break their lines with the violence of the surprise; the blue mass sways, retreats and turns to headlong flight, leaving three hundred bodies on the field; gunners, guns and position are all suddenly saved.

The fighting was ferocious throughout. It began always with that big-calibre artillery which seeks to deafen and demoralise rather than destroy; then, before the smoke had blown away, it was followed by avalanches of men with bayonets and hand-grenades. The old tale that Austrians are afraid of cold steel is now a back number. Italians no longer depreciate them.

One hears much of Austrian disaffection, of Austro-Hungarian regiments being ordered to fire on Slav, Transylvanian or other shirkers, and of undue alacrity to surrender, but I have not been able to verify a single case during the recent raid, where every subject of the patchwork Empire displayed both fortitude and ferocity. The Alpenjäger have been described as exhibiting the indifference of Moslems, also as wild beasts battering

against the walls of a cage, also as sheep flocking to the slaughter. In any case they came up to the cannon's mouth without flinching.

I was reminded of a river that suddenly appeared in Abyssinia when I was crossing a dry bed. First I had heard a distant rumble like that of an express train; then I had seen a high greyish mass advancing upon me at a prodigious rate, and I was scarcely across before it swept over my tracks, bearing with it great trees, carcases of sheep and gazelles, all the miscellaneous loot which it had gathered on its tempestuous way.

Here, on the table-land of Asiago came eighteen battalions from Cesuna, trickling through the mountain roads, gathered themselves into an interminable column as they swept into Val Canaglia (the Valley of the Brigands), for all the world like a tropical torrent except that they rushed on up the pass between the mountains in a vain endeavour to inundate the Italian trenches. Then the artillery opened fire upon them and they were raked up in heaps.

The Italians did not indulge in the same din or the same reckless waste of munitions as their adversaries, but their firing was more effective.

They were less spectacular but more practical in their courage. There was no blindness about their impetuosity. Even the Alpini's utter disregard of the enemy's fire seemed to have some method in its madness. A glance round or an instinct or second sight told them where each blustering shell would go and dig its grave, so why neglect work for the doubtful advantages of cover?

Here are two incidents which illustrate the different temperaments.

During the intense bombardment of Coni Zugna, the splinters, chipped off the face of that gaunt rock, were so numerous that it seemed a pity not to use them as ammunition. So the Italians heaped them on trestles or tables tied over the abyss; then just at the right moment, as the

enemy advanced to conquer the position, the ropes were cut and an avalanche of stones sent him flying headlong. One seems to remember similar warfare in the reign of King Priam.

But your Austrogoth is far more modern. A strange affluence of litters was observed on the north slopes of Mount Lemerle, nice new litters with cloaks neatly spread over them, and the bearers wore conspicuous red crosses on their arms. They were all going towards the line of fire, yet they were not carried on the shoulders uncovered, as empty litters usually are. They seemed remarkably heavy too. One did not want to fire on the Red Cross, but this was very suspicious, and for ways that are dark the heathen Chinee is a babe compared with an Austrogoth. Well, it had to be risked and the litters were all found to contain machine-guns.

And the following reports tell their own tale of Austrian fortitude and Italian courage.

May 16.—Violent bombardment from 6 a.m. till noon, and 2 to 6 p.m. The same again on May 17. As we answered their machine-guns with ours, their men indicated our positions with black and yellow flags. We fired on these signallers and saw the flags pass from hand to hand, from the still warm hands of the fallen. At 5 p.m. the bombardment ceased and their infantry were disposed in order of attack. They came along the road from Albaredo, then extended themselves in chains and made signs to us to surrender. During the bombardment two sentinels took cover. Captain Bastreri made them a sign to return to their post. At that moment a grenade carried off the leg of one of them. He said, "All for you, Signor Capitano." Bastreri replied, "Not for me. In half an hour I shall be dead." And so he was.

There were five consecutive assaults up to night-time. The Austrian officers advanced with their soldiers, which is unusual. They had alpenstocks in their hands. The enemy were superior in numbers and showed great valour.

At 8 p.m. the positions were again in our hands. We patched up our wounded hastily and they returned at once to their places. We were awaiting reinforcements. At 2 a.m. came unexpected orders to retire, for Zugna Torta would certainly be surrounded. We obeyed with great grief. It was an orderly retreat under difficulties. One gun could not be blown up because of all the wounded around it. Litters were improvised for the wounded with rifles and blankets. Nothing was left for the enemy that could possibly be taken away. Then in silence, very calm, with set teeth, the survivors of the battalion defiled to the back of the position and scrambled down the rocks. The Austrians did not perceive the evacuation till dawn. When they came to occupy the positions, our artillery caught them in its fire and avenged the dead of the second battalion. . . .

There are many enemies on those high rocks and the Alpini have to cross a little green space without any cover before they can attack, while machine-guns are raking them from above. But the Alpini go up just the same and slaughter the defenders with bayonets or club them with rifles. They will not surrender. They go on fighting to the last moment. The fight is rock to rock, man to man. The Alpini advance singing. They seem inexhaustible, immortal, eternal. . . . At last an Austrian officer, miraculously unscathed during the medley, says in perfect Italian, " I surrender." As he hands his pistol to a big Alpino, we notice that he is very pale and trembling all over. Asked the reason for his alarms, he replies, " Because I know what awaits me," and he explains that he thought, if not shot, he would be tortured!

All are now agreed that the Trentino invasion was a mistake. One famous critic, while admitting that the Austrians did not foresee a Russian advance so soon, contended for some time that they did succeed in one of their objects by detaching Italian troops from the Isonzo and entangling them in the mountains of the old frontier.

This argument has been effectively answered by the capture of Gorizia and the entanglement of Austrian troops that ought to be hurrying back towards the Carpathians.

In any case, the invasion was not a military surprise. It occurred precisely where invasions of Italy always have occurred, and it formed the chief part of the murdered Archduke's famous plan. The obvious countermove in *Kriegspiel* was to defend the sides of the triangle, narrow the angle, retreat to the base, and, against the remote possibility of defeat there, have a fresh army waiting in the plain to fall upon the invaders. All this General Cadorna accomplished with mathematical precision, and his troops soon returned almost to the points they occupied before the raid. The Austrians certainly reckoned without the Russians, but more important still, they reckoned without Italian heroism and celerity. After a humiliating year of defensive warfare on their own soil, they were taught a sharp lesson at their first attempt at invasion.

But while it lasted, the attempt exposed the Italian army and people to a severe strain.

The days from the 16th to the 21st of May have been aptly described by Italians as their Passion Week: they were no longer fighting merely for civilisation, for oppressed brethren, but on their own soil for their own homes. They had seen the enemy's proclamations of a promised land, where the rich cities and the good wine and the fair women of Italy were offered to the invading hordes. And on their triumphant return they beheld the devastation whose further progress they had stayed. At Asiago were all the effects of a flagellating bombardment—torn roofs, wounded houses, mutilated walls, naked trees shivering without their leaves. These were the usual consequences of warfare. But at Arsiero there were signs of a systematically organised sack, such as had been destined for Vicenza, Verona, Milan. . . . Nothing whatever had been spared

within the houses. What could not be removed had been burnt or smashed to fragments, uselessly, deliberately, methodically. And the hastily abandoned trenches were full of loot of every kind—mattresses, tables, chairs, cupboards, blankets, basins, pictures of Saints, even children's toys.

The whole panorama presented a scene of awful splendour, especially at night-time when incendiary fires reflected themselves against the mountains, coloured the pine-forests with violent lights and peopled them with monstrous shadows, while a thickly jewelled sky seemed to mock man's handiwork with serene solemnity. Clouds of fat smoke lay stagnant over the valleys, where the enemy had burnt masses of dry grass and straw to hide the first movements of their retreat. To behold the cremation of your own country-side is a grand stimulant to the zeal of reconquest.

The zeal indeed on both sides left nothing to be desired. Let me give a description of the effect of artillery upon a forest. I had it from an eye-witness and it struck me as vivid.

At the most exposed points the trees were reft of their leaves by the first bombardment and seemed ashamed of their nudity, then the branches were shredded, the skin being removed after the clothing. Limbs followed until there remained but ragged, tortured trunks. Then the 305 and 280 shells, pouncing in flocks of eight or ten, tore the trunks up by their roots, fractured the rocks, raising violent eruptions of wood and stone. Deep graves were opened wherein the whole face of the earth was buried, and the uprooted trunks disappeared beneath a pall of stones. The last traces of the forest had been blotted out. There was no longer a blade of grass or a leaf, nothing but white rock and reddish sand to be seen. A pungent smoke choked the throats of the valleys and issued over the whole field in fantastic shapes with sinister shadows like Djinn of the

Arabian Nights; suffocating whirls of dust danced wild fandangoes; the awful roar of artillery knew no pause. And all through this hell fresh men were at work: they carried away the wounded, they heaped up stones, they dug, they accumulated munitions and hand grenades. No sooner had the cannons become silent than these men rushed forward among the corpses with extended rifles, certain to find none remaining to resist. A blizzard of bullets sent them headlong. So the bombardment began again, more intense than ever. . . . Failing to dislodge us with cannons, the enemy brought forward masses and masses of infantry, continually renewed. They advanced by leaps, in floods. Never a moment's respite. Our lines were thinned, but the survivors did not retreat. Constantly reinforced, the enemy's hordes came within a few paces of the tortured trenches. It was a hand-to-hand fight with bayonets and grenades, a fight at ten yards for days and days. Sometimes one had to yield a bit so as not to be swallowed up by the tide, but it was inch by inch, though there was no other possible support save some mountain batteries against which the enemy's artillery was always raging. . . .

The emotional side of the Italian character was exhibited in the great joy of reconquest, a passion of pride in recovering the beloved territory, which had been temporarily occupied by the stranger. "On our return," exclaimed one of the liberators, "the beauty of the shattered scenery seemed to revive, the air was purer than ever, the remaining trees were more green, the song of the birds was sweeter."

All are agreed that the population remained wonderfully calm. At Forni, during a bombardment, an old man could be seen working quite unconcernedly in the fields; while a girl was carrying pictures out of her house, she explained that they were portraits of her father and brother who had fallen in Africa.

The counter-offensive began very quietly. The orders



On the Slopes of the Carso. Shelter for the Italian Troops in the Trenches

were that the bombardment should not be furious at first, lest the enemy's suspicions should be aroused. There were rather more shots than on the previous days, but always on the same objectives. Gradually the fighting became more and more desperate.

The country was all to the enemy's advantage. They had all the dominating positions, and the Italians had to fight their way up the successive slopes with little or no cover. Where there was no vegetation on the bare rocks, they were exposed to the enemy's full fire; where there were firs and pines, defensive obstacles had been placed between all the trees. The enemy's troops and military organisation were specially suited to defence; their artillery was highly efficient; they had a minute and perfect knowledge of the ground; moreover, a counter-offensive has this disadvantage, that it cannot employ surprises.

On the other hand, the counter-offensive had these advantages: good health and good spirits; numerical strength, excluding the fear of a war of exhaustion; a daily diminution of the moral effect of the big cannonades, the soldiers realising that the material damage was not equal to the exuberance of the display. And all are agreed that the solidarity and fraternity of the whole army have never been greater than they are to-day.

The sharp, thorough, businesslike way in which the Austrians have been swept back removes all reasonable doubts about the efficiency of Italian arms or the completeness of the eventual victory.

XVIII. MILITARY HOSPITALS

For a certain time, I was surprised by the appearance of beatitude on many faces when turned towards hospital. No doubt the incessant roar, the frost-bites, the knee-deep slush, and all the privations afford a continuous nightmare, but they would not make me want to awake in a ward. Apart from the preliminary passport of lead in the gizzard or a slit in the weasand, I should shrink from the atmosphere of surgery. However white and cosy the beds, however bland and beautiful the ministering angels who smooth pillows and cool fevered brows, I can still detect the clatter of cutlery in the background, the swish of blood on the operating-tables, the conflicting odours of benzine and petrol and chloride of lime and iodoform and chloroform and gas and ether and suppuration and death.

But the wounded warriors of Italy perceive only smiles and starch, sheets fragrant with soap and lavender, stoves and sunshine. After their bout with General February, they have become fanatical fire-worshippers, sybarites all abandoned to the pure sensuality and sober intoxication of warmth. They crawl out of their blankets like cats, or beg to have their beds moved if only they may draw nigh to the logs or the windows. For weeks and months they have never paused to think of heat or cold or life or death or pain or comfort, and now all of a sudden they abandon their whole minds to the joys of hot water and warm wool and soft pillows and sunlight, coveting every gleam, sulking jealously if another takes the warmest seat.

Here is a gigantic shepherd from the Abruzzi, who has spent his whole life more or less out of doors, as healthy and strong as any mountain bear, with never an

ache or pain until the Austrogoths struck him in the thigh with one of their explosive bullets. Now he has both fists in his eyes and sobs as though his heart would break because his hot-water bottle leaked and he cannot have another one at once.

And all are so gentle over their disappointments, tigers transformed into kittens. Here is Aldo, who was the terror of his regiment, always on the look-out for a scrimmage. He half strangled a comrade in the trenches for cutting him out when they were volunteering for a forlorn hope. Now he looks more like a nursemaid there on the verandah holding a parasol and a bowl of soup for his former rival.

Another characteristic scene. A smooth, delicately nurtured young officer, seemingly a bundle of nerves, has been going through a very hard time. The doctors are whispering with the chaplain and nurses about breaking bad news. For weeks they have been hoping to save his leg, but gangrene has set in, and the only hope of saving his life is amputation. Would it not be better to chloroform him and operate without warning? No, no, success is too doubtful. He may have some last messages to send. Then a smile steals over his face and he addresses them quite firmly, without opening his eyes, " You need not worry. I am quite indifferent what you may do to me now I have once known the real joys of bed."

A major called to a lieutenant to come to him in the firing-line. The lieutenant ran to obey, and as he ran his head was cut clean off by a piece of shrapnel. Like a stricken rabbit, he went on running and fell at the major's feet, gushing forth torrents of blood. Meanwhile, the major lost both his hands from another fragment of the same shell. He died a few days later, and all the time he was in hospital he never ceased murmuring, " Poor fellow; it was all my fault. Why did I call him? " though, of course, he was in no way to blame.

As a sort of finishing course for the victims of war, I may mention the mutilated soldiers' hospital at Milan,

the first of its kind to be started in Italy. There were only twelve patients when I went, but many others were expected. The idea is not to leave them like most veterans, to end their days in gloomy idleness, dependent on grudging charity. I saw a joiner who had lost his right arm and could not yet use a plane, but he was working at the lathe quite successfully with his left hand. Others were being trained, according to their capacity, for mechanics, gardening, stationery, toy-making, and other simple pursuits.

Much deafness has been caused by the noise of guns and the cold damp. A doctor told me that no one is really stone deaf. Even those who are born deaf possess some rudimentary sense of hearing, and those who have lost their hearing at war may recover it after a course of massage. One of his patients here was going through a treatment with flutes and drums, and had already begun to distinguish certain sounds.

The same doctor related an experience he had had with a man who was struck dumb by all the emotions of Alpine fighting, and a terrific but harmless tumble halfway down a precipice. One evening at the hospital at Rovigo, he was seized with convulsions, as though a prey to violent terror. Then he became quite calm and ghastly pale. The doctor determined to try suggestion. He stared the man full in the eyes and rubbed them gently. Then he took the head in both hands, closing the eyes with his thumbs, and called out loudly, " Here is your father. . . . Don't be afraid. . . . You are among friends." The invalid suddenly shook himself and clutched at the doctor's coat, murmuring, " Papa, papa! " The doctor went on, " Yes. . . . Papa has arrived. . . . He is at the door. . . . Here he comes." The man roused himself from his lethargy and began to talk in a dreamy way. In a week he was completely cured.

The care of the Italian wounded is on this wise. Every regiment has its own doctors, who have their own ambu-



A Mountain Hospital

lances, and follow the troops in all their movements, right into the trenches. During an action, they establish themselves as near the fighting as safety permits, in some quiet corner for choice, out of the way of the enemy's fire. After the first urgent cases, the wounded are sent on to the nearest sanitary sections; these, however, are still exposed to bullets and shells. The field hospitals are as near as possible to the sanitary sections. The lightly and very seriously wounded are treated in the field hospitals. The intermediate cases are sent by train to home hospitals. The field hospitals include many schools and private houses in the fighting zone and have operating-rooms attached.

Thus we have four stations of the (red) cross: doctors' posts, sanitary sections, field hospitals, and home hospitals.

Now, in the sanitary sections and the field hospitals, the wounded arrive suddenly in great numbers, all unclassified, sometimes as many as 300 in a single sanitary section. Imagine the confusion in a storm of rain or snow, when they are all streaming with blood and mud. Out of 300, probably 250 need no immediate attention beyond bandaging, and can be sent straight on to the field hospitals. But the others may be in urgent need of complicated operations (in throat or abdomen perhaps), which cannot be undertaken in a small place crowded with wounded, where there is no peace and quiet and the necessary surgical appliances may be lacking.

To remedy this, Professor Baldo Rossi proposes travelling surgeries, which would afford a wooden operating-room 10½ feet by 19 feet, fixed together with iron supports. Such a surgery can be transported on two camions, mounted in six hours, and dismounted in two hours.

It is hard work at the sanitary sections, conveying wounded men about all day long, and on occasion they must be fetched from the trenches. The ambulance men see only the most horrid part of war. They pick up

soldiers screaming and streaming with blood and tears, and carry them across a zone swept by artillery. And they have to proceed cautiously. They must not go too fast or they will shake the sufferers, and they cannot stop to take cover, for operations may be necessary at once, and every moment is precious. Meanwhile, the soldiers who look on, and the wounded themselves, are calling out to them to stoop or hide or take care. Here are none of the intoxicating thrills of a bayonet charge. Calmness and vigilance are the only orders of the day. It is the obscure side of war, but demands as much pluck in its way, has its passive passages of true honour and glory.

XIX. FRIENDS AT THE FRONT

I CHANCED to witness a strange little drama at Marseilles when I was waiting for the arrival of the Indian troops. My duties as a newspaper correspondent had led me to haunt a low public-house opposite the docks. Indeed, I spent several nights (at £1 a night) on—not under—the host's dinner-table, for the base commandant had refused me access to the landing, and here within the cordon I could see everything.

The Indians made long tarrying, so I had plenty of time to make a variety of friends. Among these was a genial French sergeant, who had just been invalided from the front. He told me a sad tale. He had set forth, only a few weeks ago, with a life-long friend, more to him than any brother; each had sworn that he would break the news to the family if aught befell the other; they fought side by side and were struck down by fragments of the same shell; in hospital, he heard that his friend had been blown to bits; but, as he told me with tears in his eyes, he had not yet had courage to let the family know.

After telling me this, he buried his face in his beer. Then, as another soldier strolled in, my friend suddenly gave a convulsive spasm and grew very pale. I asked if his wound was hurting him, but he was staring into space as though he had seen a ghost. "Jules!" he screamed as he staggered to his feet. "Gaston!" cried the other; "they told me they had buried you—and I have not yet been able to tell your wife. Have you come back from the other world to reproach me?"

They fell into each other's arms and wept like children.

There must have been many incidents like this in bygone wars. News then reached families when Fate

pleased, often only when soldiers brought their own news home after many years, if, indeed, they came home at all. The death of a husband or parent could be presumed only by rumour. Imagine all the Rip van Winkles who returned from Buonaparte's Moscow campaign.

But nowadays the perfection of communications, which many consider the hall-mark of civilisation, has quickened the demand for news from the front, and after all these months of war, such uncertainty as that of my friend at Marseilles is no longer possible. Our grandmothers knew they had to wait, so they did wait, but modern families have gone to the opposite extreme and require constant news, by every post, by frequent telegrams.

There were so many other things to think of at the outbreak of war that the field post office could not be made perfect all at once, but now there is almost a daily delivery in every trench. The military G.P.O. is an ex-school at Bologna, a big modern building with airy halls and corridors. Every morning, some four tons of correspondence arrive from all parts of Italy to be sorted and despatched to the various fronts. Here are some statistics to illustrate the magnitude of the operations:

Ordinary correspondence to soldiers . . .	1,016,250 a day.
,, ,, from soldiers . . .	1,050,000 ,,
,, ,, between soldiers . .	76,000 ,,
Registered correspondence to soldiers . . .	60,700 ,,
,, ,, from soldiers . .	180,000 ,,
Parcels to soldiers	497,000 ,,

And governments realise the need of soothing public opinion. That is why they keep their censors busy with a drag on the pace of ill-news. They also remember that for every soldier on active service an average of five relatives also serve, who sit at home and wait. The patience of such servers is essential to a good public opinion, and public opinion needs humouring in war-time.

Moreover, this is a sentimental age. See this sidelight on the temperament of your modern swash-buckler. There is a committee at Milan for sending slabs of chocolate to the front, and I am permitted to quote from a letter of thanks: " Forgive my impertinence and even my greed, but your chocolate does not satisfy me. You will think me ungrateful and badly brought up (*senza educazione*). Forgive me. I want a few kind words, a few sweet words, sweeter even than chocolate. Here at my distant post, I feel forgotten by everybody. Cannot you find some kind souls to send me a few cheering words to dispel this Arctic gloom? The snow is our only companion up here, and she, poor dear, is very, very cold." Then I find a soldier writing to the press asking for post-cards for everybody at the front " so that they may know that their country appreciates their dangerous and glorious enterprise, however obscure the individuals may be." You cannot imagine troopers in the swearing days of old Flanders pathetically imploring perfect strangers to send them picture post-cards to decorate their trenches at Christmas, even if such things had existed.

And here are some advertisements from the " Agony " columns of the Roman papers:

> WHO WILL cheer me up on Easter Day, which I shall be spending in the trenches? Books, kind words, etc. Captain Manari, Bersaglieri, War Zone.
>
> LIEUTENANT of Bersaglieri, returning to the Front, desires correspondence with young lady whose smiles may soothe discomforts, hours of home-sickness at war. Write: Gatti, Portocivitanova.
>
> FIVE distinguished young officers, free in heart and soul from all that is not a radiant ideal of glory and victory, needing the affectionate sentiment of a dear person to whom they can direct their gentle thoughts, wish to correspond with delicate female souls. Write: Sub.-Lieut. Enrico Giordano, 118 Infantry, 2 Company, War Zone.
>
> CAPTAIN of Bersaglieri, 24 years, irresistible, seeks a young lady worthy of him. Object, engagement and eventual marriage after the war. Address: 5 fr.-note 1821-060404, Post Office, Leghorn.

The kindest explanation is that some one has been making fun of the captain. Meanwhile, let us hope that he has been proving himself irresistible in every engagement during the war. Music-hall sketch-writers might find material in his interviews with young ladies anxious to prove themselves worthy of a man they have never seen.

I understand that soldiers have been well supplied with books. The Brera library issued an appeal for hospitals in the Milan district, and the response was so great that it was possible to supply the whole army. One publisher printed a special edition. Schoolboys sent their prize volumes. There were all sorts of demonstrative inscriptions on the fly-leaves: "A sister's kiss to an hero-brother"; "In the hour of grief and glory a sister's heart goes with thee."

Hun housewives possess their alleged souls in patience because Hun regulations tell them to do so. But the Latin temperament is more emotional. It was accordingly the French who began an organised news service, first for Paris, then for the whole country. The Italians necessarily started later, but their organisation has now reached a high state of perfection.

Their pioneer was Countess Lina Cavazza of Bologna, who has one son at the front and two others in the army; she has gathered round her thousands of men, women, and children who have volunteered their time and money. You may see over two hundred of them, silent and orderly, classifying correspondence at the head office at Bologna. There are branches at all the garrisons and chief towns of Italy, sub-sections at the centres of mobilisation and military hospitals, all in communication with the uttermost parts of the provinces. I am told the index-cards at Bologna will soon comprise a million names.

When an Italian is anxious about a soldier, the thing is to write to the nearest sub-section. If nothing is found on the lists there, the inquiry is passed on to the chief office, which either has news or immediately sets about

to obtain it. A squadron of ladies has now been visiting the hospitals several times a week for a long time, collecting and tabulating names, so there is no undue delay. The military chaplains are also a great help. They often enable a soldier to write his own answer on the inquiry form, and they afford precious details of the hour of death. Here is a terse, effective report: " He fell like a hero at ——, in the Val Dogna, with a bullet in his forehead, killed instantaneously with his face to the foe."

I have been privileged to peep at some of the stacks of correspondence at the Bologna office, and I find, as might be expected, that the simplest minds are the most anxious of all. They know so little of what is going on. Indeed I have met hundreds of people all over Italy, not by any means all of the illiterate class, who have not the faintest idea who is at war or why or where. My servant, who can read but not write, asked me quite seriously whether, if she went to England, she would be imprisoned because she was an Italian. All they know is that a brother or a husband or a lover is in danger and that they are anxious about his welfare.

Sometimes they think the office knows and won't tell. " I refuse to believe," one wrote, " that you will continue to make my poor old heart bleed in this awful suspense."

Most of them interject patriotic allusions to " this holy and glorious war " or " undying love for our fatherland."

Others are almost abject: " I crave pardon most humbly for troubling you. The Lord alone can reward you in Paradise "; " The boy is all I have. I kneel to you and kiss your hands." (If a corporation may not be kicked, it is at least something that a head office should receive well-merited kisses through the post.)

Again and again the letters implore : " for the love of God " or " by all you hold most dear."

They are, indeed, begging letters, clamouring for supreme charity—food not for the body but for the heart.

XX. WEATHER AND WAR

At Nice in the autumn of 1914, I noticed that the local papers stopped giving the usual weather reports. As the climate was then specially disagreeable, I concluded the omission was to avoid discouraging visitors. Presently, however, I learned that the precaution was directed against the enemy's aeroplanes. England it was who invited her allies to take this step the very day that hostilities broke out, and the results proved far more beneficial than might be imagined by the man in the street.

For the Huns, with their close intensive science, had come very near to resolving the problems of prophecy. On average occasions they would be right eighty-five times out of a hundred; when the indications were specially clear, even ninety or ninety-five ; and they were only too quick in taking full advantage of their knowledge. Their attack on Antwerp, their passage of the Scheldt, their air-raids on Hartlepool, Scarborough, and Whitby were all rendered possible by the mists which had been accurately foretold by their meteorological offices. Weather prophecy, however, depended upon a minute comparison of the state of the atmosphere of many parts of the globe, and when reports were stopped, the men of science were baffled. The immediate consequence was the loss of the two German dirigibles L3 and L4 in the North Sea, owing to the arrival of a transatlantic storm, which would have been foreseen with the help of atmospheric reports from England. Why the Huns did not use some of their ubiquitous spies to take observations and telegraph the results through neutral countries, I fail to understand.

Now, however, the scientists of all countries have

made themselves independent of foreign weather reports. Our own people have been the pioneers, but Italy with her fifty aerological stations—both home and colonial—has also been very busy. Reliance has come to be placed upon altitude instead of latitude or longitude. In other words, one proceeds to a daily exploration of the upper airs to ascertain their temperatures, dampness, and atmospheric pressures, from which accurate prophecies can be deduced.

The instruments used in Italy are a barometer, a thermometer, and a hydrometer with automatic clockwork registers. These are attached, for the exploration of great heights, to parachutes on rubber balloons a yard or more in diameter. Balloons have risen from the Pavia observatory as far as 22 miles above the level of the sea. When at last the gas bursts one of these balloons, the parachute sails down slowly, reaching the earth sometimes hundreds of miles away from the starting-point. A card is attached, requesting the finder to telegraph the results at once to the observatory or at least to take the instruments to the nearest police-station and receive a reward.

This elaborate service is, however, only for special occasions. The daily work is done by means of captive balloons of waterproof silk, some 40 square yards in volume, attached to a very thin steel wire. The wire is unrolled from a sort of capstan in a revolving turret, and, on a very calm day, the balloons will rise from 3000 to 5000 yards. On windy days, when a balloon would be driven back to earth, the instruments are attached to kites instead.

But the simplest way of exploring the air is by means of what is called a pilot balloon, some 19 inches in diameter. This is so expanded that it must ascend at a given speed. Then, by means of a theodolite, it is easy to calculate the velocity and direction of the winds at various altitudes, and this knowledge is valuable to aviators when preparing for a flight. For some time nothing more could be ascertained by this process, but British aerologists have now

discovered other calculations to determine temperatures and atmospheric pressures.

Thus with a theodolite, a cylinder of hydrogen, and a small pair of scales, three men on a remote battlefield can ascertain almost all they want to know about the weather conditions of the immediate future. And it may easily happen that their knowledge will presently decide the victory of their arms or the repulse of the enemy's attack.

XXI. A BUNDLE OF LETTERS

ITALIAN soldiers have now, very wisely, been taught to be cautious.

In the train from Rome to Frascati I found the following placard tied to every rack: "Officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers! In your houses, in your towns and villages, in trains, abstain from giving information as to the progress of the war. The things you say may reach the enemy and help them, for they may have spies everywhere. Think well before you speak and do not yield to the insistence of any one who asks for information about the operations in which you have taken part. The royal carbineers have orders to arrest those who neglect this patriotic duty. The decree of June 10, 1915, forbids giving information on the defence of the state and the military operations other than that which appears in the bulletins published by the Supreme Command."

Not long after this, a bersagliere began to chatter to me in a train. He had been to the front and hoped to go back soon. I supposed it had been very cold. Awful. Whereabouts had he been? No answer. Was he by any chance in the fight at Pal Piccolo? He was longing to talk, but he shut his jaws with a snap. Pal Piccolo! he went on presently, where was that? He had never heard of it, though it had occupied pages in all the papers. Would I like to see a photograph of his brother, who had just gone to the front?

Meanwhile, there is no reticence about soldiers' letters. Almost anybody will show you a bundle, and they are so natural that you obtain vivid glimpses of military life and character. I will copy a few extracts at haphazard.

Here is one that reveals the sense of scenery possessed

by nearly every Italian, as well as the vicissitudes of his moods:

"The marvellous sight of the fresh snow on the crags of the Jof of Ulontasio filled me with joy and I forgot for the moment all my fatigues and the discouragements which oppressed me yesterday. When you are in touch with the enemy, when the roar of artillery seems to protect you with a paternal voice, when the last groan of a dying companion incites you to vengeance or victory, oh! then heroism is easy, duty is sweet. But when you are alone up there, far from all human help; when nature, the season, the elements seem to be contending for your life in those ruthless solitudes, and at night you see your men drying furtive tears as they think of their distant families, believe me, you need a big heart and a great power of resistance to retain your spirits. . . . To-day I looked at myself in a glass. I am very black and thin, and my nose is much bigger than it used to be. Otherwise there isn't much difference."

"Three Russians escaped yesterday from the Austrian positions. They had been taken prisoners in Galicia. One was drowned while trying to cross the torrent; the other two climbed up here, all drenched, frozen, half dead. The sentinel stopped them and I ran up. They began to shout at the top of their voices, '*Brati ruski! Brati ruski!*' which I knew meant Russian brothers. I led them to the fire and burned their clothes which were in a terribly verminous state; then I fixed them up as best I could and sent them on. They were two tiny little men from Little Russia, full of life and fire, happy and hungry. With them was a small female dog, about three months old. We have adopted her as our mascot and she took a great fancy to the soldiers, who have given her the name of Fella, and one of them has made her a cloak with an old bit of cloth."

"We had a man here called Pessina, who earned a medal for valour in Libya and another at home at Milan



Gorizia

for some act of bravery. He has now been distinguishing himself again at San Michele. It appears that he got drunk one day last October and had to be carried to his quarters in a cart. A lieutenant saw him and told him he ought to be ashamed of himself. Thereupon Pessina tore off the ribbons of his medals from his tunic. ' Who are you? ' the lieutenant asked. ' I will show you what I am at San Michele. My name is Pessina.' And at San Michele, he suddenly walked out of the trench, saying, ' I am going to take an Austrian machine-gun.' No one knows what he did, but he was seen to return from Height 4 with one of the enemy's machine-guns, which he had slung with a rope round his neck. This earned him another silver medal. He has now been killed while taking away the revolver from a surrendered Austrian."

" We are not safe even in the dark, for every five minutes the Austrian searchlights turn night into day. First a gleam shivers across the horizon like dawn; then a huge ray cuts into the sky or clouds; then the ray breaks into a huge blaze of brilliant blue, comes down slowly and explores the country-side; then the bullets whistle and the shrapnels burst, the fire following the light. Our soldiers go their way quite calmly with their hands in their overcoat pockets and half a cigar between their teeth. At the ' House of the Shoemaker,' when a ray falls on them, they press their forefingers to the tips of their noses, their thumbs and middle fingers to the stars on their collars—this is a very usual exorcism against the evil eye—they remove their cigars from their mouths, spit, and go on their way singing."

" We have had the brigade of Alessandria here. The King dubbed them the Garibaldians of San Michele. After strenuous fighting on the Carso last summer and autumn, they are preparing for fresh exploits. I went to a banquet they gave in honour of the occasion. They chaffed their young chaplain about a flirtation, for he had been seen talking to a girl; and he replied with seminary phrases

such as '*Nego suppositum*' and '*Vade retro, Sathanas.*' Then he grew serious and told us how the girl was unhappy about her sweetheart who lay in the little cemetery close by; and he recited some eloquent inscriptions he had seen there; so the chaff died away. Then they all began to talk of dead friends. Later on there was a dance, and a subaltern sang music-hall songs dressed up as a woman. After that we had patriotic songs—the hymns of Garibaldi and Mameli, '*Torna, torna, Garibaldi*' (Return, Garibaldi, return) and '*Morte a Franz, viva Oberdan*' (Death to Francis Joseph, life to the martyr Oberdan), and the song of the Alpini:

Versa la tua borraccia,
Insiem dobbiamo bere,
Insiem dobbiamo morir . . .
Ma muori tu, tedesco ;
Muori chè giunta è l'ora . . .

(Pour out your glass. Together we must drink. Together we must die. But die thou, German. Die, for thine hour has come.) We wound up with a mock court-martial on the chaplain for flirtation, and he was sentenced to six bottles of champagne. 'Make it three,' he pleaded. 'Reduced to three on account of extenuating circumstances.' And the chaplain paid for three bottles."

Here is a Christmas letter: "We had a three hours' march on a mule-track with plenty of Christmas trees all round us, but no merry children to enjoy them. Our Christmas dinner consisted of macaroni and beefsteak. No *panettone* (a sort of cake specially favoured by Italians at Christmas). There was no champagne within miles, but ordinary wine is always welcome at war. In the evening we had an invitation to . . . the theatre! It was in a barn where part of one battalion is lodged. The curtain was constructed of camp-blankets. There were reciters, acrobats, contortionists, mandolinists, guitarists, singers, clowns. . . . Some of our men have been making toys out of fragments of the enemy's projectiles."

In one trench a goldsmith and an engraver, who happened to be together, struck up an impromptu partnership for making aluminium rings out of the enemy's projectiles, with dates, names, flowers, eagles, etc., inscribed in them. These commanded such a ready market that there was soon a shortage of raw material in what the wits of the trench called "Goldsmiths' Street" (Via degli Orefici) after a street at Genoa. So it was determined to import more from Austria. Eight or ten shots were fired at the enemy's trench, and there was an instant response of shrapnels; as soon as the explosions were over, the goldsmiths went out to collect their spoils.

Here is a description of an advance upon a conquered trench: "It was impossible to move a step without falling into a pitfall, entangling oneself in wires, stumbling over a stake or a gun, or banging against some obstacle: reels of barbed wire, iron rods, boxes, man-traps, Frisian horses, abandoned gas-bags. All this material, encumbering and insurmountable, accumulated in one place, scattered in another, disturbed again by the storm which had passed over the ground, afforded a palpitating spectacle of the recent furious struggle."

"When an Austrian loses his pouch, he is tied to a stake with his feet a few inches from the ground and his hands bound behind his back, and he is left there for some hours to reflect over his sins. Hence an inseparability between an Austrian soldier and his belongings. He may lose his head or his life or his honour, but not his pouch. He shows wonderful heroism in attempting to recover a pouch. The wounded and dying think of nothing else. It is as sacred as the flag of the regiment."

"Well, I am back again. My feelings on furlough were very strange. I was like a peasant coming to town for the first time. When I saw a woman I had a sense of stupor rather than of happiness or desire. Reading a book or a newspaper gave me the oddest emotions. I wondered if I should ever be able to take to my trade

again. One acquires quite a new character after six months at the front."

"I have been motoring about roads that have been swept by artillery, and are consequently full of pits of all sizes. Last night we had scarcely passed through a very narrow road when a bomb brought down the wall just behind us, blocking the way back. We had to get down and work at the removal of the refuse while bullets and shells whistled about our ears."

"When the tombstones were covered up with snow, we reflected that they would reappear in the spring-time as emblems of the Resurrection. Now we often have to re-bury corpses that the rain has resurrected. There is a skull with a tuft of yellow hair in a shrubbery; a skeleton hand issues from a mound as though imploring succour; two legs peer out of a heap of stones. . . ."

"Yesterday, under the protection of the rain, we were able to bury those who fell when we took the last position. It was not easy work, but our men devoted themselves to it with all their heart, with loving care, with touching fraternity. We collected letters and documents of identification scrupulously before arraying the bodies in their uniforms and committing them to the earth they had gloriously conquered. Our fallen brothers seemed to speak to us again in the writings we found, revealing to us a little of their life, their affections, intentions left unfulfilled, hopes quenched for ever. And in all this intimacy which we received from our fallen ones there was only one great thing to be noticed, an intense current of love uniting those whom war has separated. No curses, no phrases of desperation; but women who encouraged their husbands with the liveliest and warmest expressions, the manly letters of fathers to their sons, moving, inspiring missives from mothers and sisters, greetings from children to their elders, some even with bits of baby advice: 'You shoot plenty of cartridges at the Austrians, but take care not to get hit.' Among these

letters one was found yesterday in a pink envelope addressed to a young lady at Venice. Inside, among the written pages, one could see a card, perhaps a photograph. The envelope was incompletely closed, but the soldier who held it understood without opening it what was inside, and he remained thoughtful for some moments. His companions gathered round and looked, read the address, took the love letter in their hands, turned it over, smiled sadly, then gave the letter back to the man who had found it. At the first look all had been moved by innate indiscretion to read what was inside, but no one dared to profane this last message of a love that had been cut off in battle. So the thin pale letter, a little crumpled and insecurely fastened, passed through the hands of soldiers and officers, all inspired by the same respect, passed through the investigations of bureaucracy, and will now have reached Venice and the hands of the woman who must alone receive the last message of her beloved, who has died for Italy."

" The body of an Austrian lies three yards outside a trench that we took from the enemy three days ago. He was struck by an Austrian bullet during the counter-attack. There is nothing more painful than the sight of a fallen soldier being still harried and persecuted by the violence of war. We tried in vain to rescue him from this martyrdom in order to give him decent burial. The first time we were greeted with a fusillade, the second time three or four of our soldiers climbed on to the trench, holding a stretcher aloft so as to make their intentions clear, but again there was a volley. So that soldier remains there close to us, unburied, a gloomy testimony to the ferocity of his fellows."

" All resistance against mud is useless in the trenches. Novices are fastidious about it at first; the daintiest of them try to avoid it, jumping about hither and thither with the odd idea that they can keep their boots clean. But gradually the process completes itself. First the

chest is stained by leaning against sacks of earth; then they sit down and soak their trousers; a little mud attaches itself to a cap and makes its way down the backbone; and so, a few hours after coming into the trench, our soldier has a complete suit of brown from head to foot. And this is a relief, for now he need not worry about getting dirty and can move about at his ease. The mud also affords material for jests. At the entrance to one tunnel we have a notice telling us to wipe our feet before coming in. Another refers to a well-known Italian health-resort, and announces 'Mud baths—a bomb-proof cure, every day from 19 to 24 o'clock,' the period usually chosen by the Austrians for their attacks. But it is not everybody who resigns himself to the dirt. There is a friend of mine, all plastered with mud from his hair to the soles of his feet, who still persists in polishing his nails every day; he takes a neat little pair of scissors out of his pocket and clips and files away though he knows the results cannot last more than five minutes. Beards have become a common denominator for all soldiers in the first line. They are a destiny that none can avoid. A battalion of veterans had established itself in a trench taken from the enemy and had been holding out for three weeks, though they were attacked constantly by night and day. They scarcely had a minute's rest. So you can imagine the state of their beards, which grew like clover. It was during this period that a message came to the commander of the battalion, requesting him to send back a man who had given rise to some slight incident on the march. The only clue to the man was that he was clean shaven. To his great relief, the commander was spared the trouble of research and could reply without hesitation, 'In my battalion we all have beards and whiskers; no clean-shaven face has been seen here for a long time.'"

"'Dispositions for the night,' somebody began to announce in a voice muffled by a cloak. 'Where is the Austrian trench?' whispered the ingenuous youth of the



General Nivelle and General Porro

company. ' Dispositions for the night: protect yourselves as best you can. Guns in hands. Four sentinels for each squad. No smoking. No talking.' But we could think only of one thing—water! It was a sinister spot, the bed of a torrent, all dry and stony and surrounded by sharp scrub. The sun disappeared and everything became cloud-colour. It was a moment of stupor. The voice of the ingenuous youth broke the heavy silence. He was asking very humbly for a little water. No one had had anything to drink for twenty-nine hours. Our palates were like lime-kilns. A chorus of curses greeted this puerile, absurd request, which aggravated the general suffering. The boy rolled his big blue eyes in great surprise. An icy wind ran through the ditch. The mountain had ceased to give forth reflections and had become a brutal, opaque mass. All were demanding water under their breaths, giving themselves up to the desire to drink. An ambulance-man came up to me with a fixed, black look in which there was a certain amount of madness. ' Let us go and get a drink! ' He gripped my hands and went on, ' We will go to Torbole. We will go with our two bayonets to the first Austrian bar. A whisky in a big tumbler and an iceberg tinkling against the glass. . . .' ' Go away.' ' A big slice of lemon and a straw.' One of us, who thought himself unobserved, had retired into the shrubbery to suck a lemon. ' When are we going to attack that trench ? ' somebody asked. ' To-night. We shall be quite useless by to-morrow.' Battaini and Tangozza had gone out scouting an hour before, independently. They met in the scrub and nearly ran each other through with their bayonets. They brought back no news of water. But Bianchi, a Garibaldian of the Argonne, had disappeared no one knew whither, and here he was looming on the sky-line, holding in his fists twenty dripping water-barrels by the straps. ' Here it is. From a cistern. Away back. From the burnt house. It may be poisoned. Take one draught first and then wait, if you are men.'

Was it likely? Each of us glued his lips to a wooden teat, clinging to it with both hands, sucking deliriously, growling with satisfaction. Thirst having been repulsed, we were all overcome by the cold . . ."

Italian soldiers are very English in their sporting instincts. Here is a story told by a Highlander who suspected a shepherd of spying and caught him after a watch of eight hours. " The man was unarmed, but he knew the fate in store for spies, so he tried to resist. I threw down my gun and proceeded to fight him on equal terms with my fists. When I had knocked him about and covered his face with blood so that he could not go on, I told him to sit down. Then I took out my ambulance case and proceeded to apply tincture of iodine and bandages. It was quite a neat job and I told him to come along. But a few yards further on he started to run away. This was too much for me, so I gave him a second dose of fisticuffs, destroying all my beautiful Red Cross work. Then I dragged him to camp and handed him over to the medical officer, saying, ' You must cure him now. I seem to be no good as a nurse.' The wounds soon yielded to treatment, but there were other complications afterwards—by the unanimous verdict of a court-martial."

From a corporal: " I was bringing in an Austrian prisoner when he announced that he could go no further —he was exhausted and had strained his leg. I reflected for a moment, then took him on my back. For a time he behaved exactly like a log. Then all of a sudden he seized me by the throat and nearly strangled me. ' Oh! this is the reward for my kindness! ' I reflected as I groped for a dagger; but just then I stumbled over a stone and we fell in a heap with the Austrian underneath. When my knee was on his chest, he had the assurance to ask for mercy, but he did not get it."

" While the travellers were gathered round the table where passports are examined at Udine station, I saw the major in charge suddenly rise to his feet and give a

military salute to a poor old woman who had handed him her papers. 'Ah!' he cried, 'so you are the mother of Corporal Riccio! No, madam, do not cry. He is alive and much better than he was last night. They telegraphed to you yesterday morning, when he seemed in a very serious state. Now he is out of danger. Madam, he is a hero. You may well be proud of such a son. He will have the medal for valour. The King himself desires to see him. Allow me to kiss your hand.'"

A lieutenant writes: "During a reconnaissance before the capture of the Col di Lana, I heard barking in a cave under a protruding rock. There I found a handsome setter with a broken leg and a wound in the neck. I had it taken to our trench, where it was affectionately treated, and, what is rare in our enemies, it showed itself really grateful to its benefactors. Its master's name was on its collar—an officer in the Kaiserjäger. Then came the day when the Austrians attacked the Sief. At night, when the action was over, some of our pickets went about to make sure that none of the enemy were lurking about to surprise our advanced posts under cover of darkness. The dog was with one of these pickets, held in leash by the man who had looked after it. All of a sudden, the good creature stretched out its forelegs and raised its nose in the air and made a violent effort to rush towards a rock that seemed quite bare and impenetrable. It was so persistent that our men decided to follow. When they reached the rock, they discovered some steps cut into it and leading to a ledge, whence other steps went down to a narrow slit that formed the entrance to a cave. This seemed empty at first sight. But the dog went straight to a corner, redoubling its barks. Inside a deep niche stood six men, four of them officers, and one of the officers was the master of the dog, which had tracked him to his place of concealment. The dog leaped at him with cries of joy that were not precisely reciprocated, and the six men were made prisoners."

XXII. A SOLDIER AND HIS MOTHER

SIGNORA ASSUNTA (in blessed Italy we call all ladies by their Christian names) is one of those mothers who are immediately recognised as motherly. Plump and well-liking, full of harmless fun, shining with sympathetic smiles. Yet the poor dear has had little enough to smile or jest about.

Until eight or nine years ago she was lapped in luxury. Her husband had a big town house at the Capital of Flowers, and four fine villas with gorgeous gardens in various parts of Tuscany. There were crowds of servants. Open house was kept. Signora Assunta's lightest whims were instantly gratified.

Then, under the German system of peaceful or preliminary penetration, her husband's big business was broken up. He died of grief or, as the doctors pronounced, of heart failure, and the estate was wound up with assets *nil*. But she, brave woman, went on living and smiling for the sake of her two boys.

One, aged fourteen, has not yet succeeded in earning anything, and remains at Portoferraio to share her penury in a spotless attic. The other, Sandro, volunteered for the army at the first whisper of war. I chanced to do her a small service, and we have become friends. One day she showed me a bundle of Sandro's letters, asking whether I cared to print extracts. A journalist had wanted them for the Italian press, but she would not lay her soul bare to the public. England, however, was far away, far out of her orbit.

The first letter was written while Italy was hesitating about war. It is dated Florence, 23 March 1915. The first three pages are devoted to an outburst of boyish patriotism, in which the influence of d'Annunzio and many fer-

vent orators may clearly be traced. "Dearest Mamma, you know my opinions about the duty of war. . . . We must give up all for lovely Italy . . our persecuted brethren call us from beyond the Alps . . . my heart glows, my veins thrill, my pulses beat when I ponder over the old glories of Rome and dream of the glories which now await my Italy." Half rhapsody—half perorations; half prize-essay—half hustings. Rather crude, but rather nice.

The boy is more convincing when he describes events. He is a quick observer and has a gift for selecting facts. "I want to tell you," the letter proceeds, "what happened to me two nights ago when I was on guard at the Austrian Consulate. Towards ten o'clock news came that some five thousand people were advancing upon the Consulate where we were. We immediately formed a cordon and fixed bayonets to bar their way. In about ten minutes they began to arrive—a vanguard of students who made such a demonstration as you can't imagine. Then followed all sorts of people—men and women, old and young, children and veterans, reservists, Garibaldians: in a word, the deluge—all yelling and singing. As you can well imagine, I began to perspire. How were we to keep back all those people who wanted to pass? And all the time we were wishing we might let them pass. Seeing we would not give way, they changed their tactics. We were assaulted by a swarm of ladies in such a way that we could not even attempt to resist. The fact is, I found myself embraced by a lovely girl, who would not let me go until I unfixed my bayonet. As a reward for doing this she presented me with a rose and a kiss. The rose is a bit crumpled, but I send it with this letter. Keep it as a memento. It is not all there, though, for I am keeping part of it to bring me luck at the front. Keep your heart up, mother. I've been told by a fortune-teller that I shall live to be eighty. As I am only twenty that leaves me sixty years to live."

Nearly all Sandro's letters from the front reveal his constant anxiety about his mother. He must be kept constantly informed about her health, he fidgets if she has a cold; but the overwhelming preoccupation is about her finances. The lady who had five houses and posses of servants and furs and feasts not so very long ago must now maintain herself and a growing boy on 2frs. 15c. (say, 1s. 9½d.) a day, and the prices of necessaries have gone up fully 50 per cent. He does what he can, but never ceases to lament how little that is.

"9 September 1915. I hear that the Alti Forni (the munitions factory at Portoferraio) are giving employment to those who return from the front. Winter is beginning here, operations are being suspended, and the factories will have more work to do in view of renewed activity in the spring. Why shouldn't I get a job there in the interval and earn a bit for you? I have learned to do so many things at the front. . . . My rest has been a short one, and now I am ordered off to the trenches again, a beastly place this time. During the three days I have been down here I have only eaten once, but now things are to change a bit. One thing against which there is no remedy is the water which filters in everywhere and in which one has to sleep. As a matter of fact, the cold prevents one's sleeping at night, and the cloak and blanket are really insufficient. I look up at the Alps in envy. They appear so cosy in their new white cloaks of snow. All the same, I am quite well, as I hope you both are. Let me know if you received the 30frs. I sent you on the 2nd. As soon as I receive my next bonus I will send it to you. It is the bonus for my work as telephonist (1fr. a day). I will keep half a franc for myself, if you don't mind."

Next to the anxiety about his mother's moneys comes the first thrill of excitement over the prospect of short leave home.

"26 September 1915. You tell me in your letter that

there only remain 14frs. out of the 30frs. I sent you, and this month I can only send you 15frs. as I have to think of the journey and keep a few coins for the first few days at home. I am still well. I say ' still,' because I have now been sleeping for three nights softly couched in a puddle containing four inches of reddish water. Aldo can describe the colour to you, for he has spent many nights in it."

The next letter explains where all those precious francs went.

" 27 September 1915. I received your parcel yesterday. But I must say you have sent me far too many things, and I see they are all new, which shows me that you bought them, spending God knows how much. This really upsets me very much, for nothing, or next to nothing, can have remained out of the miserable sum I was able to send you. And at the end of this month I shan't be able to send you anything, because the authorities have now adopted the beautiful plan of paying extras only at the end of the next month. You can imagine how much this annoys me. I hoped to be able to send you a bit more this month out of my earnings from the sale of empty cartridges, which one picks up and takes to headquarters, where they are paid for at the rate of 1fr. 25c. the kg. (say, 6d. the lb.)."

Is it not a pathetic picture—the boy and his mother each struggling to spend these small windfalls on the other? And mother's parcel turns out not to have been so very urgent, after all. Every Italian town has been subscribing lavishly for parcels for the heroes at the front. Turin sent off ten thousand parcels for Christmas. Sandro's next letter describes the arrival of a consignment from Naples.

" 5 October 1915. Like all the soldiers of the Tenth Army Corps in the first line, I have received from Naples a parcel containing a mountain of things: three pairs of foot-wrappers, twenty stamped post-cards with the

names of the donors printed on them, one packet of mild pipe-tobacco, one packet of Maryland tobacco, one pipe, one copying pencil, one packet of peppermints, two neckties, one white scarf, two coloured ones, one woollen belt, three cakes of soap, one clothes-brush with a mirror at the back, one comb, one shirt, one towel, one tin of insect-powder. What a heap of good, useful stuff! When we received the parcels all of us—infantry, artillery, pompom-men, etc., nearly all Neapolitans—yelled out, 'Hurrah for Naples!' Hearing all this row, the Austrians suspected an attack, and began the devil's own fusillade, without, however, hurting anybody."

Now the hopes of leave grow brighter and brighter.

"5 November 1915. At last, after two months of trenches, I am to go back and rest. Next Monday I am to come down from this high altar, now consecrated by history. I have seen so many go up to it and so few come down. I hear that leave may be given during this rest, perhaps to all, certainly to those who have been at the tight corners. I am at the head of the list, because I am the only one of my company of 300 men who spent two nights on the Carso in the most dangerous positions. The proof is that, only ten days ago, one of my comrades (we were three in one observatory) was killed at the telephone by a grenade, and I had my clothes shot through and torn three times. But never mind all this rot (*queste sciocchezze*). The essential is to have those happy days of leave and to come home and kiss you all, and see my native hearth again after ten months' absence. I enclose a money order for 25frs. Do, of course, what you please with the money. Only, if you don't happen to need it all, you might put aside 7frs. in case I do come home. Save them only if you are sure you really have enough. I shall really be happier if you spend it all."

And, after all these bright dreams, there comes a hideous nightmare of misgiving. Can the boy really afford to come home when he does get his leave?



A Trench in the Mountains

" 10 November 1915. Here I am resting at Brescia. I have had sixty-three successive days in the trenches. But even in that there are compensations. The Captain assures me that, as soon as leave is allowed, I shall be one of the first to enjoy it, and he is proposing me for the medal for valour. But while there is time, it is better to think well before doing a thing. Do you think I can come on leave without being a nuisance? Of course, you two can't keep me for the sixteen days of my leave, and I shall have few coins in my pocket. What is to be done, mother dear? Think it well over, and let me know what you decide. I leave it to you. Another annoyance is that this month I can't send you anything, because I earn nothing while I am resting. Just answer my question quite frankly. I repeat it, so as to be quite clear: *Ought I or ought I not to come home on leave?* Yes, yes, I will do all I can to come home for Christmas. . . . Well, if I can't, I will remain down there in the trenches."

But he did not have to remain " down there in the trenches." He reached Portoferraio by the evening boat on the 15th of December, wearing the silver medal for valour and the proud smile of a hero. My eyes grew very dim when I saw him embracing " *mamma carissima* " on the quay. I know, but he doesn't, that she pawned her wedding ring and her last trinkets to give her boy a merry Christmas.

PART III

WANDERINGS IN WAR-TIME

I. LINGERING IN LIGURIA

SPOTORNO, *July* 8, 1915

NATURE intended the Riviera for a Summer Paradise, lavishing all the brightest gifts at the very moment travellers choose for their departure. Perhaps they are wise, as the insects provide a purgatory. The mosquitoes are so tame that they eat out of my hand—and face and arms and legs. At night-time, before a storm, an enormous moth, bigger than any sparrow, comes beating and beating against my window, glaring with luminous eyes, bristling with wicked whiskers. This though the local vintages are of the lightest.

And the flies! They are the Huns of the insect world. Like the Huns, they possess all sorts of highly specialised Kultur. For instance, they can walk on the ceiling, in defiance of all laws of gravity. They are utterly reckless in their pertinacity. Hit them, bruise them, stun them: they will return again and again when once they have determined to reconnoitre your face or your plate. Fear is unknown to them; death has no terrors. Kill a score of aggressors and another score is ever ready to storm the same nostril and suffer the same fate. Baal Zebub of Ekron, God of Flies, must have graduated at Heidelberg, for his emissaries are all Masters of the Arts of Hunnish diplomacy. Indeed, they could give points to Uhlans in wanton annoyance. Suppose, just for the sake of argument, that you have a fancy for a drink: well, without even the excuse of temperance fanaticism, they immedi-

ately apply a local veto. No sooner is your eye cast toward the bottle than they start skirmishing on your face and you must needs devote many thirsty moments to their dispersion. Then try to draw the cork and they all forsake your face to debouch upon your hands. At last, with heroic patience, you have filled your glass and rejoice over the imminence of refreshment. With all the desperation of a forlorn hope, the flying squadron circles in the air, dashing helter-skelter into your wine, into your mouth, into your eyes. They fail in their prohibition-campaign, but I defy you to say that you enjoyed your drink. They did not want your wine: they merely wanted, like true teetotallers, to annoy you. There were peaches and anchovies and bowls of *risotto alla Genovese* on the table, which they would have vastly preferred, but they left them all severely alone.

To give Baal Zebub his due, I have found one use for flies. During a Ligurian summer I like to dodge noontide heat by rising with the cock—I had said with the lark, only Ligurians have eaten every one. Well, the flies prove the trustiest of alarums, the most punctual of chambermaids. Not theirs to overwind or oversleep themselves. At the first shimmer of false dawn in the bowl of night, they are buzzing in my ears and shaking my hair and bidding me arise. And it is quite useless to plead that I am tired or desire to renew dreams of home. I shall not know an instant's peace until I show a leg and proceed to prove my gratitude by providing them with the sport of a knotted handkerchief. In this connection I have made a discovery in French philology: *mouchoir* must be a derivative of *mouche*.

Funerals afford the chief spectacle from my windows at Spotorno, and it is interesting to gauge the precise fortune of the deceased by the pace of the procession. When a rich man sets out for the Kingdom of Heaven, there seems no limit to the reluctance of the mourners. They march like the hand of a clock. You can scarcely

tell they are moving at all. But when the poor end their hideous lives, there is almost a Marathon race to convey them to their last resting-place. I have seen children quite unable to keep up with the funerals of fisher-folk. And the speed of the chaunting is measured on the same financial lines.

Savona has been my shopping centre for three months, and convinces me that Ligurians are not a nation of shopkeepers.

I want a bathing-gown, wherein to bask upon the sands. Here, under the arcades of the Corso, is the very shop, but there is none to serve me. I rap and rap. In about five minutes a cross old woman appears with macaroni hanging out of her mouth and tomato-juice smeared up to her eyes.

"Good-morning, signora," I say, with a deep bow.

"What do you want?"

"Good-morning. Is it not the custom to say good-morning at Savona?"

"Oh! good-morning to you. What do you want?"

"A white bathing-gown, if you will be so kind."

She disappears into the recesses whence she came, muttering curses under her breath, for customers are a great nuisance and macaroni soon grows cold.

In my innocence I imagine she is searching for bathing-gowns, but five minutes pass while I cool my heels.

I venture to rap again.

Enter a boy munching a pear.

"What do you want?"

"A white bathing-gown, as I told the signora some time ago."

He produces a garish garment with green and yellow stripes and red crescents, the very thing for an astrologer or a scarecrow.

"But I said white."

Then his face lights up with fiendish glee. "*Nu ghe ne!*" (There aren't any), he shouts triumphantly.

Perhaps that will teach customers not to come and disturb folk at their food.

The shopkeepers are not all rude, but their lethargy makes them passive resisters of trade. If they have not an article under their hand and nose, Heaven forbid that they should scour shelves in search of it! And this is all the more strange because Ligurians are famous for their interest in small sums of money. They have no fixed prices for anything, so unless you are a sure and sudden judge of values, you have the worse of every bargain. Wrath is quite useless, even on receipt of bad coins, for the enemy simply chuckles.

If such be the attitude of salesmen when greedy of profits, imagine their defiance when no guerdon arises. The frigidity and distance of a stage-duchess would seem open arms compared with the temper of a railway-ticket merchant in Liguria. The tobacconist at Pegli told me there was a train at 3.46, but when I reached the station I learned that it did not stop at Spotorno: I should have to wait till 5.40.

"All right, give me a ticket now."

The young man wagged a forefinger on a level with his right ear, and said, "*Ts-ts! Nu-nu!*" (the local negative).

"Why not?"

"Against the regulations."

At 5.25 I returned and stood about, waiting for the window to open. The man saw me but took no notice. At last the train came and I called through a grating to ask if I could not have a ticket.

"How can I give you a ticket when you come at the very last moment and the train is just about to start?" he asked impatiently.

"Accident! But I have been waiting and waiting and you never opened the office."

"Oh, well, you had better get into the train and pay there."

Yes, but no ticket collector had come round when I

reached Albissola, where all the passengers alight and walk two hundred yards to dodge a broken bridge, which is now being repaired, oh! so slowly. As no tickets were examined on leaving this station or on reaching the train again, I could have walked off scot-free, or even taken a ticket here and escaped the fare from Pegli. It was only just before Savona that two officials lounged through; they would not have noticed me if I had not plucked their sleeves and said I had no ticket. This amused them and they were delighted when I explained how the Pegli man had said, "*Nu-nu, ts-ts!* Too late!" On reaching Spotorno I was not asked for my ticket, so I could have had a free ride all the way if I had not been so offensively honest. What an easy-going people!

It is possible to walk the twenty-seven miles from Savona to Genoa in a day, but wise virgins will take the electric tram at Voltri for the last stretch. The journey begins over a long hill flanked by old fortress walls and greenly swarded terraces and a moat like a Jacobean bowling green—say Bramber Castle after a Zeppelin raid. There are great masses of high oleanders everywhere, joyous pinks and whites and reds.

Albissola also looks pink and white and red and green as she reflects herself in the mirror of her cobalt sea, but her colours have a very different tone, for she is old, faded, weather-beaten, like a patched and powdered belle who has not had a new coat of paint for years. Perhaps, though, her sober looks are a consequence of the recent storm, which swept away the railway bridge. I made the maid at the inn describe her experiences. She was very voluble in a strange hill-dialect, but had little or more to convey than that it was all very alarming. It lasted about half-an-hour with violent thunder and hail; a torrent brought down trees; the cellars and streets were flooded; all were terribly frightened.

Varazze is a big straggling town with many quaint old streets. After dinner, I strolled along the High Street,

stepping over a rope that stretched across it in the gloom just beyond the cinema-show. Confound the silly workmen who left the rope there to trip people up! Well, it was a lovely Southern night and I stalked ahead, star-gazing. Was the milky way a symbol of love or of eternity? Very nearly of eternity this time, for it was by the merest bit of luck that I happened to look down just as I had one foot over a chasm some hundred yards deep. While carrying away the big bridge, the storm seems to have bitten off the road and left it with an edge like that of a cut cake. My readers may well thank their stars.

Next morning, I had to walk half a mile out of my way to circumvent this chasm. The most impressive merchandise of Varazze is the wealth of still life exposed by the fruiterers—great buxom peaches of poor flavour, green and purple figs, all luscious within, mountains of apricots, greengages, pears, and bright gold pumpkin-flowers that make quaint fritters. Why is it that, when shops offer all the finest fruits for a penny the pound, hotels give you an unripe apple and a mouldy banana grudgingly for dessert? And why, all over Italy, is nearly all the rich fruit picked unripe?

Now came one of the pleasantest parts of this coast: up and down through a forest of rare and beautiful trees, recalling an endless English park or a bit of Abyssinia. The tumult of the crickets was deafening, and I actually heard a few birds singing, the which is very rare in this sporting country. The roads here are terribly cruel, all strewn with sharp stones and never a square inch where you may avoid them. Mould has been scattered over lightly at intervals, so as to trap your feet more readily.

Here is a hint for anybody desiring to cultivate his gifts of observation. Let him drop his pocket-book on the road; remember that it contains the passport, without which he will certainly be arrested as a spy; then go back

and hunt for it. I have not done this myself, but I should imagine the exercise would stimulate the memory in respect of landmarks.

At Cogoleto the road suddenly became as smooth as a billiard-table, whence I conclude that there is local option as to repairs. In a wall here I espied a cannon-ball with an inscription asserting that it was fired by a British gun against General Masséna in 1800. Another inscription reports, "Here was the very ancient Castle of Cogoleto, conferred by the Emperor Otho II. on the Columbus family in 1200; razed to the ground by the Emperor Napoleon I. in 1800, to continue the road from Nice to Rome." Such are the sweets of civilisation. Surely Buonaparte might have had the grace to make a circuit and spare that castle.

Soothing forests again, then a white road beside the greenest coast-scenery. Here a carbineer passed me on a bicycle, looking neither to the right nor to the left. Strange that I had not yet been arrested and charged with spying, for I must be a suspicious character, tramping roads in ragged clothes with no visible means of subsistence. How hot that carbineer must be bicycling in a tunic of thick black cloth! Here he was waiting for me at a level crossing by a tunnel. Ha! ha! if I were a spy, I might have my pockets full of dynamite.

He walked across my path in a way calculated to avert my suspicions, so I suspected him at once and volunteered to show him my papers. In a trice I was surrounded by three soldiers with fixed bayonets. He plied me with questions and examined all my documents very carefully. That from the Municipality of Spotorno sufficed, but he took a professional interest in the coat-of-arms on the British passport—"*una bella carta*"—in the permit to leave France and its stamped photograph, in the authority to breathe the air of Marseilles, in all the rest of the bundle. But he was extremely suspicious about my age and asked the soldiers what they thought, whereupon

they wagged their heads. Would he advise me to have my hair bleached?

Cerribelli says I must not mention that I was arrested near Cogoleto, as there is a lunatic asylum there. He wanted to know what the carbineer said when he let me go. The precise words were: "It is a hot day." How the weather makes the whole world kin, to be sure.

The woman who sold me cakes and ale at Arenzano said the place-name meant healthy air (*aria sana*), but I back my philology for healthy sands (*arene sane*). I asked her if she was of this district, and she replied almost with indignation that she was Parmese. This, although Varese, her home, is only just over the border and the Genoese dialect is spoken there. Note the wonderful survival of particularism in United Italy,—*campanilismo* (belfryism) the Italians call it. Every village still mistrusts the neighbour with whom it waged war in the Middle Ages.

She lamented the absence of a railway from the coast to Varese, eighteen miles away. This absence is due to the selfishness of the Mayor, who owns most of the property and does not want it invaded. The result is that the people are unable to export their wealth of timber, fruit, cattle and wine except with great difficulty. When her parents were ill, she had to pay £12 for a doctor from Genoa. When she goes home, she has to pay twenty-four shillings for a cab that takes five hours, besides four shillings to the driver.

Prà has been advertising itself extensively as a new bathing-resort, with villas, hotels, cabins and all the sport of the sands, but seems to possess nothing of the sort. My chief memory is a walk of at least a mile beside a whited wall (as white as Cromwell's face) that attracted the sun towards boiling-point, would have ripened a peach in the twinkling of an eye, almost boiled an egg.

I suddenly dived into an eating-house with a big yard entirely overshadowed by a pergola of vines. The waitress had one of the most delightfully wicked faces I ever saw,

beautifully ugly and full of severe mischief. I had a vermouth and seltzer, then soup, fresh fried sardines, fruit, and a quart of iced white wine, and coffee: all for 1s. 1½d. The 1½d. was for bread—an unconscionable price compared with that of all the sack.

It is strange how persistently certain small joys of life cling to the memory. Offhand I cite three of the most persistent of Italy: those wonderful Oriental sweetmeats of Venice, which Byron and Disraeli loved—candied fruits on straw skewers, hawked on trays of glistening brass all over Saint Mark's Square; a John Dory, issued straight from sea to grill at Spotorno on my honeymoon; and a visit to the Pallavicini gardens at Pegli forty-one years ago.

Now here is Pegli about a mile beyond Prà and I am not surprised that those amazing gardens should have stirred the imagination of a child. The fun, the surprises, the quaint conceits, the fantastic practical jokes, the mixture of high horticultural art and bad taste and simple frolics and crude humour keep the imagination busy all the while. At Earl's Court the whole array would find its proper atmosphere. Here at Pegli, between the bluest of seas and the greenest of mountains, it is a genial impertinence.

The Marquis of Pallavicini, who devoted seven years (from 1839 to 1846) to this laborious and very expensive construction, must have possessed a quaint type of mind. And he did it all for his own amusement, or that of his children, with no idea of attracting the throng of tourists who flock hither in time of peace. Forty-one years ago, it was only with the utmost difficulty that admittance could be obtained. My father had to make a special journey to the Pallavicini Palace at Genoa, fortified with letters of introduction, before we could pass the portals. Now there is a huge staff of guides always waiting to take parties round.

Lofty iron gates, with much gilding and a noble coat-

of-arms, never opened except for the family and their friends, bar the way to a long avenue, perhaps the most beautiful avenue in Europe. The road is as carefully kept as a ball-room floor—indeed I felt almost constrained to eat my cigarette-end rather than desecrate the appalling tidiness. The lofty trees, stretching away out of sight, would afford a fitting approach to an enchanted castle.

Here is a slender pavilion of white marble to commemorate the visit of a royal person some fifty years ago. There are serious marble statues within and without. Then you suddenly look up at the friezes representing the seasons and enjoy comic relief. Spring is the drollest of all, a ludicrous revel wherein man and beast take part, the carouse of topers being only surpassed by the very irreverent antics of giddy goats. All rather horse-play humour, but very much alive.

Now we reach the stately approach to a triumphal arch, a solemn avenue of lofty trees, a neat path flanked by trim turf, more marble statues, everything most regally grand. Passing through the arch, we find ourselves in a wooden summer-house, a very humble wood-cutter's cottage. It is a neat, pretty cottage, and the outside is all embowered in lovely flowering creepers. The point of all this is that the cottage-front and the triumphal arch form part of the same building; they are the two sides of the medal, illustrating the extremes of wealth and poverty, grandeur and simplicity. Not content with this, the architect has suited the vegetation to his theme. Leaving the noble avenue as you enter the triumphal arch, you find yourself in the most rustic of rural scenes as you emerge from the cottage. Save for the trimness of the box-hedges, whose haunting fragrance pursues me still, you might be far away in the wilds, amid brambles and thickets and all the restive tangle of a jungle.

Here are a dozen dice arrayed in the recess of a shrubbery. They are some two feet high, of white wood, with

the pips hollowed out and blackened, ideal stage-scenery for the trial in *Alice in Wonderland*. Then, after a stiff climb, you find a mock fortress, which looked very baronial and mediæval from afar. Then back to the great grotto, entirely composed of stalactites and stalagmites, collected with enormous patience from caves in all parts of the world. Some of them have been cut into fantastic seats, others have been polished by hand until they resemble semi-transparent jewels. The paths are too trim for a real grotto, but half the place is under water. At a small inner lake is a white image of Our Lady reverently set up in a niche over a kind of rude altar. "Surely," I exclaimed, "that cannot be a natural stalactite." "No, sir," the boatman replied grimly, "it is a stalagmite."

As we emerged from the grotto into the main lake, I noticed something moving among the tropical plants of the rockery just above our heads. It suddenly flung itself down on to the knees of a German-Swiss just opposite me. It was a grey snake about a yard long, and for a moment I thought this was one of the many practical jokes for which these gardens are famous. But a glance at the boatman's white face quickly convinced me that this was no mechanical toy. He whisked it dexterously into the water with an oar, with which he then tried to hit it, but he succeeded only in making a great splash, for it swam off very gracefully towards the opposite shore. There was great excitement among various gardeners, who suddenly appeared from nowhere, but did not manage to intercept it before it made its escape among the bushes. "Was it poisonous?" the German-Swiss inquired with a green face and doubly guttural tones. "Poisonous!" said the boatman with awful solemnity, "*altro che!* I should rather think it was." The guide, however, assured me presently that the boatman was a liar.

This lake is one of the prettiest bits of artificial water I have seen. In the centre is a white marble temple of

Diana with a statue of the goddess, and there are four marble Tritons around, forming little islands of their own. They and the mosque and the pagoda and the wonderful shrubs cast lovely reflections on the limpid surface. On coming ashore, we found a graceful swing, that I remembered of old. No one seemed anxious to take advantage of the guide's offer of a ride. I assured the German-Swiss that it gave peculiarly subtle sensations, but he was not to be lured until I hinted that he was afraid. Then he took his seat and flung himself into the air with great vigour. The guide's lips were twitching, his face was unduly red, and his eyes lit up with fiendish glee as he pressed a button in one of the swing's supports. Instantly a fine shower-bath played upon the wretched Swiss from right and left and up above, even from the seat itself. Several seconds elapsed before he could slow down and escape. He was inclined to be sulky about the joke, especially as I was joining a little group of Italians in very hearty laughter at his expense. However, his turn was not long in coming. The guide pressed another button and another sharp shower issued from the swing right into our midst. " The swing always punishes those who laugh at the unfortunate," he said with a chuckle.

At last we emerged at a creeper-covered cabin in the centre, with Venetian shutters all round. Meanwhile, I had engaged the guide in private conversation, and coins passed from my pocket to his. The German-Swiss and I were alone at the entrance to the cabin. Where on earth was the guide? Too bad of him to disappear like that! Well, we might as well see what there was inside the cabin. The German-Swiss and I bowed and scraped to each other with Batavian grace. *Seniores priores!* Age before honesty! At last I prevailed on him to go in first, though he looked rather suspicious at the dampness of the floor. No sooner was he inside than I pulled the door and locked him in. He shouted anxiously, but I pretended not to understand. Then I pressed a button and

the walls began to revolve in a bewildering way, while horrid ghostly noises, a mixture of groans and screams, greeted his ears from underground. I pressed a second button and profuse shower-baths began to play upon him from roof and walls and pavement.

"Dear me! Dear me!" I exclaimed through the shutters, "this is too bad. I will go and find the guide."

"Let me out! Let me out! Open the door at once," a guttural voice rose above the ghostly groans and the noise of the waterspouts.

I hurried away and met the guide only when I reached the lower lodge.

"But where is your friend?" he inquired with a grin.

"That was not a friend," I replied. "He was a German-speaking man—who knows? perhaps a spy."

"You have not left him up there in the cabin?"

"Indeed I have. I thought it might do him good to take a bath."

Luckily, my train for Genoa was up to time and I made good my escape from Pegli.

II. THE GENOESE PEOPLE

"GENOA the Proud."

When the Genoese have said that, they have said enough. No need to describe those gracious narrow streets whose shops are full of fairy gold, or the gigantic buildings and boulevards, the movement, the energy, the vitality of a race of conquering merchant-princes. Read about them in any history, for they are the same to-day.

They are a race apart; they are prouder of Genoa than of Italy; yet they have done as much for Italy as any of the various peoples of the peninsula. They began the demonstrations which led to intervention against the Huns; just as they fomented the movement for united Italy; just as, in their haste, they discovered America.

Genoese does not, of course, mean merely an inhabitant of Genoa, any more than Englishman is restricted to the South of the Tweed and the East of the Tamar. The Rivieras of the rising and setting (Levante, Ponente) and a certain hindland proudly claim the Genoese name, reveal the Genoese character, talk the Genoese tongue.

I said one day to pretty Fannj (I love the Italian spelling), mine host's niece at Spotorno, that if she would teach me Italian, I should soon excel the natives.

"But," she protested, "I don't talk Italian. I am a Genoese."

Italian was to her an acquired tongue, and she talked it as a Celt talks English, which is to say exceeding well.

I think it was the Genoese tongue which first attracted me to the Genoese. It is exceedingly harsh, brutal, violent, as unreserved as Billingsgate in its modulations. Compliments sound to the uninitiated like direct insults. But no sooner does one begin to know it than one yearns

for it, as for caviare. There is a silly proverb about the best Italian being Tuscan tongue in Roman mouth. I told every one I wanted to try the effect of Genoese tongue in British mouth. I carried note-books and jotted down words and phrases until I had compiled a fair vocabulary, which I fear was not as delicate as I should have liked, for the Genoese are mischievous and took advantage of my innocence.

Then a strange thing happened.

The Genoese are courteous and correct in their bluff way, but as far removed from gush as Icelanders. Strangers really don't interest them. Well, no sooner did I begin to try to talk to them in their own tongue than their whole attitude was entirely changed. Their intense patriotism was touched.

This is what happened at Rapallo, probably the prettiest place on either Riviera. During my first two days there, I communed only with nature; no one took further interest in me than to ask if my soup was to my liking. Then I went yawning into the dining-room for a night-cap before early rest. It was empty save for four ladies chattering in Genoese at another table. Presently one of them happened to look round and caught me chuckling to myself. They grew red and whispered; one asked me if I had understood anything of what they said.

"All," I replied.

"What were we talking about?" she asked incredulously.

I gave an expurgated version in broken Genoese.

I don't know when I have heard such screams. The host was sent for; I was dragged to their table; brothers, cousins, aunts appeared from nowhere; bottles of Asti popped and flowed like water (how else could wine flow?).

Thenceforward I was adopted. We organised a picnic next day to a shrine of the Madonna far away in the mountains and walked arm-in-arm; troops of brown

maidens came and sat on my bed in the morning before I rose; we hardly ever separated for an hour of the day; we were photographed in repeated groups; there was even a mock marriage with a mock mayor and all the civil formulas, uniting me to a brown maiden whom I shall never see again. Faithful in their friendships, too, all these merry folk, for I still receive sheaves of picture post-cards from them at Christmas and Easter with exuberant greetings in Genoese.

Poor dears, they had a terrible time a few days after I left them in September 1915. Rapallo was visited by one of those swollen torrents which swoop suddenly down from the mountains of these coasts. It came in the early morning when everybody was in bed, swamped the cellars, swept the streets with a wall of water six feet high, sacked the shops, carried many buildings bodily into the sea.

My landlord wrote, " Half the White Rose Hotel has been destroyed, but your room still stands and we shall be doubly glad to see you back again, for this tragedy has hit me very hard. We were prisoners for forty-eight hours without anything to eat or drink. Then at last soldiers brought us bread in boats."

If one had patience, it would be interesting to study dialects wherever one went, for one might deduce racial characteristics from the predominance of words from various languages. There seems to be a good deal of French in Genoese, and some Spanish.

Perhaps some of my readers may be amused to puzzle out the origin of the following: *Pue* (father), *Mue* (mother), *Lalla* (aunt), *Carega* (a chair), *Shue* (flowers), *Miaggia* (a wall), *Massacan* (a builder), *Su* (sun), *Maiu* (husband), *Puishe* (peas). Unfortunately I never learned Saracen.

I was told that, if a Genoese is given cold soup, his retort is to stick a spoon into his buttonhole, but I have failed to ascertain whether this pleasing custom has extended elsewhere, or what is its precise meaning.

III. THE GENOESE KITCHEN

HERE is one of the minor problems of life that always attracts me. Thanks to Free Trade, our food costs us less than that of other countries; yet people frequently go abroad for economy: which seems absurd. One unsatisfactory answer is that we need not keep up the same appearances away from home. Another explanation, to be admitted with reluctance, is that foreign kitchens make your victuals go further, though you fare worse. Anyhow, now that we are all supposed to be economising in every direction, it is worth inquiring how other burghers eat.

After compassing most civilised lands, I have come to the conclusion that Genoese cookery offers as good rough value as any other. This does not mean that you need only consult a book of recipes and choose everything described as *alla Genovese*, for the Province of Genoa is just as likely to offer you food *alla Milanese* or *alla Siciliana*. The important point is to have the dishes prepared by a Genoese cook or at least in the Genoese way.

Now the prime characteristics of Genoese cookery are simplicity and economy. It is filling without being interesting. As my *Scia* [1] Beeton says in her preface, it is delicate without excessive refinement. I have found it even monotonous.

If you are tired of soups and macaronis, you may begin your meal with *risotto*. This is a savoury mess of rice boiled with lean of veal, calf's brain, broth, marrow, parmesan, and saffron. Almost the only difference between *risotto alla Milanese* and *alla Genovese* is that the Genoese wash their rice while the Milanese are content with fanning or blowing it, to the great discontent of mealworms who remain to be boiled. And the Genoese rice remains longer on the fire.

[1] *Scia* is Genoese for Mrs.

Here and now in Italy you may make up your mind at once to abstain largely from meat. A cutlet *alla Milanese* is tolerable once in a way, though I see little to distinguish it from a *Wiener Schnitzel*, its probable parent. But the Genoese cutlet is an abomination beside it, and when, day after day, week after week, you are faced with the solitary alternatives of cutlets, roast meat, boiled meat, all equally insipid; when chicken comes as a great Sunday treat and offers naught but string and bone; when you find that the Genoese lack the imagination to cook eggs or potatoes; that, with one or two exceptions, their fish is a snare; and when they persist in the monstrous heresy that wild duck should be well cooked—what are you to do but find refuge in herbs?

That is the refuge which Genoese kitchens have found with signal success. French meat, being inferior to British, needs disguise in many messy sauces. Italian meat being often, like Dr. Johnson's leg of mutton, not only originally sinful but badly killed, badly hung, badly cooked, and badly served, needs still more drastic treatment. Hence recourse has been had to many aromatic plants, which save the situation; provide, indeed, strong characteristic flavours. At first they are surprising: you pick out a scrap of leaf or a bit of stick from the stew, cursing the carelessness of scullions. Then you learn to recognise the basil, rosemary, sage, mint, pine-kernel, however hidden away in a mound of rice. Now I verily believe I shall miss them when I go away, especially a certain young lamb all larded with needles of rosemary—rosemary, in this case, for remembrance. Chopped rosemary, too, for snails that have been grilled alive, but here I am saved by insular prejudice.

Nor do the herbs depend on seasons, for the Genoese are clever at preserving everything but their abundant fruit. Basil, for instance, is cleaned and plucked and dried and put away in jars of oil, hermetically closed; months later, it remains undistinguishable from the fresh. Or again,

pounded in a mortar with Dutch cheese and parmesan and garlic, it is dissolved in oil. Any herb, it seems, may be dried in the sun and revived with warm water, so that mint sauce becomes possible all the year round. The white truffles of Piedmont are kept in sand for three or four months; the black truffles of Norcia even longer.

One tribute I must pay to this kitchen: garlic is never abused, never at least to the extent which renders Marseilles repulsive to tender nostrils. Indeed, I have scarcely noticed it in meal or breath during months at close quarters with the humblest society. Nay, I think the British traveller has long exaggerated its horror, which does not compare with that of the British onion. True, I once carried a garlic clove in my tail-pocket as an amulet against vampires at Monte Carlo, and sat upon it in heated rooms: but that is another story. And I have never quite reconciled myself to *agliata piccante*, a sauce of oil and pounded garlic much in vogue with steamed potatoes. Onion of course appears everywhere, but with discretion. In one recipe, you are told to put an onion in the pan and take it out again quickly, *bastando l'odore* (the smell sufficing)—as well it may.

The Genoese certainly read us a lesson against waste of wild material. They are quick to collect and dry not only mushrooms but all sorts of edible fungi. Borage is also a great stand-by, though claret-cup is happily unknown. Borage is fried in oil and eaten by itself, or boiled in oil like a Christian martyr and chopped up for all sorts of stuffings.

The despised polenta, a mess of Indian corn, perhaps the same as American hominy, is tolerable as a novelty, especially with truffles or some choice condiments; sportsmen eat it with little singing-birds.

Chestnut-meal is cheap and good, providing many tolerable puddings and cakes, especially a chestnut bun served up in chestnut leaves, and *castagninna*, a local specialty, for which nearly every small household possesses a big peculiar pan.

Sweets, however, are at a discount. There is an obligatory *pan dolce* (sweet bread) for Christmas, New Year, and Epiphany—a poor plum-cake with a faint flavour of orange-flower and pine-needles and marsala. But the general notion is that sweets are only for children or very young ladies. Even the abundant fruit excites small interest. Ices, however, are consumed to excess all through the warm weather and the smallest coffee-houses must have a large variety.

Atonement for the neglect of fruit is made by deep respect for vegetables, the egg-plant (French, *aubergine*, Italian, *melanzane*) and small marrows being highly favoured. There is a sort of artichoke-tart with mushrooms and lemon pulp and parmesan, that has a quaint charm of its own. But the prime vegetable dish of Genoa is the *torta pasqualina* (Easter tart) with beetroot as the outstanding feature, a delicate open pie requiring cream and curds and many eggs and infinite patience. You must use a feather to paint each flake with oil, then prick constantly to avoid bubbles, and divide into thirty-three slices, representing the years of our Lord's life.

As for salads, scarce any green thing that grows is too humble for consumption. No doubt the French *chapon* (a bit of bread rubbed with garlic and stirred up in lettuce) has suggested the Genoese *capponalda:* moisten a rusk with cold water and spread it with oil, salt, capers, olive-pulp, and fillets of anchovy. *Cappon magro*, a glorified mayonnaise, catalogued as a salad, might be a distant cousin to the bouillabaisse. Rub semolina biscuits with garlic, sprinkle them with vinegar and water and salt. Boil a cauliflower, French beans, celery, and carrots together. Cook some potatoes, beetroot, and scorzanera together. Boil a fine fish and a rock-crab in separate pans; cut them up and mix them. Then fry in oil two or three dozen shrimps, eight eggs, twenty-four Spanish olives, six salted anchovies, three-quarters of an ounce of capers, twenty mushrooms, and two dozen oysters. Now you are

almost equipped. Spread the biscuits over the bottom of a dish and pour over them a sauce made with pounded anchovies, garlic, pine-kernels, capers, yolks of eggs, olives, etc., all passed through a sieve and diluted with oil and vinegar. Now exercise your art in distributing the various ingredients, remembering that the fish and rock-crab must come near the top. Cover with more of the above-mentioned sauce, arrange the oysters round the circumference, and decorate the whole surface with twenty-four thin round slices of carrot. Then go away to the front and forget all about it.

As a contrast or antidote to this Gargantuan salad, let me commend *pancotto* to your notice, the very soup for Lent or other hard times. Boil what water you need with the right doses of salt, oil, garlic, and grated parmesan. When the garlic is cooked, throw in some scraps of dry bread, boil twice more, and serve at table. "This rather economical soup," says *Scia* Beeton, "is specially suitable for children and big families."

Stecchi are another specialty of Genoa. Take lean veal, sweetbreads, rumpsteak, brains, mushrooms, artichokes, cocks'-combs, and anything else you can think of; transfix them with *stecchi*, wooden skewers like toothpicks about five inches long and stained with saffron; make a kind of rissole with cheese, eggs, truffles, bread crumbs, etc.; serve with the ends of the toothpicks protruding.

Perhaps the oddest Genoese dish is hare *in agrodolce* (bittersweet). First jug your hare, then catch somebody to eat it with a mixture of onion, ham, sugar dissolved in vinegar, sultanas, pine-kernels, and grated chocolate. A coarse fish is treated in a similar way, but without the chocolate.

The Genoese stand revealed as easy-going, laborious, slovenly, painstaking, gluttonous, penurious cooks. They bring into their kitchen a careless, calculating temperament that annoys Italians of other provinces. I do not know how far gastronomy is an index of character.

IV. THE MYSTERIES OF MACARONI

A RABBIT merchant in Italy is very busily advertising that, as trenchermen must now retrench by carnal abstinence, they cannot do better than eat rabbits. This in the land of macaroni and risotto!

In England we know macaroni only as a brittle cane, compounded of dried flour, presented to the palate in the guise of walking-stick and water. In Italy it is succulent, luscious, satisfying, full of delightful surprises. No mortal man ever wearied of bread; macaroni inspires still greater constancy.

Wherever you roam in the Peninsula, 'mid pleasures of restaurants and palaces of princes or never so humble homes, meals invariably begin with *paste asciutte*, *minestra*, or *minestrone*. These are all the same thing with a slight difference. *Paste asciutte* (dry pastes) are macaroni dropped into boiling broth, taken out after a few minutes and served with all sorts of delightful condiments. *Minestra* (soup) and *minestrone* (great soup) are the same paste served in a broth—seven ounces of small or nearly nine ounces of big macaroni to every quart. This sounds far simpler than it is, for each kind of maraconi requires a different period of immersion that can only be learned by intuition or endless experience.

It is only at Naples and in England that men talk of macaroni as a generic term. If you go into a North Italian shop and ask for macaroni, you will either be given the big thick Neapolitan tubes or be told, "Very sorry; we have no macaroni, but here are many other kinds of paste."

The number of pastes is infinite. Vermicelli, of course, thinnest of thread-worms; pale baby-ribbons, called

reginette or even *terrette ; coppetti* like cock-boats; the *gasse* of Genoa, folded back on themselves like sleek white ties: whole gamuts of fancy, the proletariat of paste. But beware of your grocer when you buy. Not only are there two kinds of each—the commoner for soup and the society of such vegetables as egg-plant (*aubergine*); the better for eating " dry." But, as you value your palate, see to it that you get the produce of Genoa, Naples, or Tuscany instead of some base imitation, perhaps made in Germany; apply every nasal and chemical test to ensure the freshness of your paste, for the sourness and mustiness of stale paste surpass the sickliness of superannuated meat.

A grade higher in the social scale of pastes come the eight-shaped *corzetti*, with one egg to every ten and a half ounces of flour. Now we are approaching the rank of the home-made, which includes *taglierini*, *lasagne*, *piccage* (or napkins, in Genoese allusion to their shape)—nobles these of two-egg rank. They require special furniture as well as special thought and genius. " Any cook who is without a *lasagna*-table, most necessary harness of a Genoese kitchen," says my *Scia* Beeton, " will do well to obtain one." So there! An unvarnished table, not unlike that upon which bakers knead, but not to be described in detail here. Take what wheat flour you require—so runs the recipe—and make a heap of it on your table. Make a hole with your fist in the very middle (*nel bel mezzo*), break what eggs you want, add a little salt and tepid water, then begin to beat the eggs well with a spoon till they have impregnated the flour, continue the operation with your hands until the whole forms a firm and comely paste. Should the paste seem a trifle soft, correct the fault, but with judgment, by the addition of more flour; should it seem too hard, a little tepid water affords relief. Now summon all your artistic skill. Take your rolling-pin, pull, push, draw, and distend the paste into the slenderest leaves; place them to dry for half an

hour on the cleanest of cloths. Then fold the leaves one by one round the rolling-pin, give a sharp swift cut along its whole length, and carve again into big squares. Now the *lasagne* are ready to be plunged into boiling broth and asperged with grated parmesan.

Is it not strange that Italy should retain the secret that grated parmesan is one of the prime necessaries of existence, of culinary comfort, of grateful repletion? On every dinner-table, *vice* the crude cruet of Mrs. Gamp or Mrs. Grundy, stands a sort of glorified mustard-pot with fantastic hinges and a snapdragon mouth and a nook for a spoon, but instead of mustard's stagnant slime within, you find the fair flakes of newly-fallen cheese, softly, insidiously insistent of appetite. As with truffles, you are never sure that it really possesses a flavour of its own, but you have not the heart to refuse it and you would soon resent its absence.

At the apex of the whole hierarchy come *ravioli*, princes of paste, prime glory of the kitchens of Genoa. To prepare *ravioli* is a long labour of love. Invite a man to lunch, and whisper that *ravioli* will be there; then you may be sure that he will not shrink or fail. When a restaurant has screwed up courage to offer *ravioli*, the fact will be proclaimed loudly for days in advance, and there may be a queue to secure tables. On the Feast of the Annunciation it is an unwritten law that all must celebrate the vernal equinox by eating *ravioli*. It is a stricter law than any on mince-pies for the Nativity, or pancakes for Shrove Tuesday, or roast goose for Saint Michael and All Angels, or boiled chestnuts and fennel for All Saints' Day.

A long breath and I will lift the veil of this tremendous luxury. First, you shall have prepared a stuffing to the following effect: Take a bunch of borage, clip off any hard or withered leaves, boil for five minutes, squeeze out all the water. Brown a pound of lean veal in a saucepan with a little butter—but no salt, mind you—and see to it that the meat is not overcooked. Plunge half a calf's

brain or two lambs' brains, three ounces of buttock, and a sweetbread into boiling water to remove the outer skins. Chop up the whole array—veal, buttock, sweetbread, brains, herbs—most minutely on your Genoese table with your crescent chopper, pound little by little in your mortar till you have reduced it to a paste. Add six eggs with their whites and four lonely yolks, some crumb of bread steeped in broth or veal gravy, a handful of grated parmesan; spice and salt according to your inspiration. Stir the whole with violence until you have uniformity and the right consistency. Now you have your stuffing and can begin to make the *ravioli* themselves.

This at least is the orthodox stuffing. But there are various heresies and reformations. Some, for instance, are wont to add a little sausage, but this impairs the supreme delicacy. Others substitute curds for the soaked bread-crumb, and this is an improvement if the *ravioli* be all eaten on their birthday. Cecilietta, the village miser's wife, stuffs her *ravioli* with nothing but chopped, boiled lettuce; that, however, is considered a sorry way of celebrating the Feast of the Annunciation.

Now for the *ravioli's* outer garment. Of the best white flour take half the weight of your stuffing—in the present case one and a half pounds of flour to three pounds of stuffing. Make a hole with your fist, intrude two eggs, and proceed as you did with the *lasagne*. Keep your paste under a bowl, so that it shall not dry; make it into leaves or squares one at a time with your rolling-pin; dab on portions of stuffing with a spoon-handle; fold each leaf with finger-tips into a little cushion. After they have dried a little, cast them gradually into the best boiling broth—a quart of it for every four dozen *ravioli*—boil for fifteen or twenty minutes, and serve in the broth with grated parmesan. Better still, according to Genoese judgment, serve them dry—that is to say, with one of the innumerable sauces appertaining to *paste asciutte*. But if you take my advice, the sauce will not have too

strong a character of its own, else the exquisite delicacy of the stuffing may be overborne or lost. The most approved plan is to boil them with water instead of broth and serve them with veal gravy. But remember that the ingredients I have enumerated will satisfy a party of twelve or fifteen if served in broth, six or eight only in the dry state.

V. THIRD—SINGLE—MILAN

NEXT to wading through dusty roads and hobnobbing with tavern-folk, perhaps the best way of peering inside a country is to travel third-class. And the expense may go hang, for you soon save your penny a mile by missing most of the taverns.

My junction for Milan was Sampierdarena, a suburb of Genoa. Here I was tickled by a marble tablet in the middle of the station wall, where the clock would be if any one bothered about time. A pompous inscription informed posterity that here in 1887 the Imperial Prince Frederick William, suffering from deadly disease, was received by King Humbert I.; and that this monument was erected as a perpetual reminder of Italian appreciation of German civilisation. It is, perhaps, lucky that only strangers trouble to look at monuments.

I engaged the nearest man in heated argument as to the propriety of the description, Humbert I., while as yet there has been no Humbert II. I told him how, during the interregnum, Cromwell refused a Dutch despatch because it alluded to King Charles I. and the numeral implied the existence of a King Charles II. The answer was that I must be careful not to miss my train.

Italian dislike of fuss is well illustrated at Sampierdarena. There are no indications of likely platforms for various destinations, no zealous officials, no eager cries of "Take your seats." You wander about a sort of ploughed field intersected by a dozen railway lines, dodging derelict engines that prowl at random and make sudden dashes at your heels. You espy a friendly face at a carriage-window, and ask, "By the way, are you going to Milan?" Roars of laughter, for the face is on its way to Ventimiglia. Once upon a time there was a Norwegian who nearly

died of merriment when a sailor gave him two black eyes and called him a bloudy Swede. The Italian sense of humour seems equally acute and refreshing.

The third-class carriages are on Pullman lines, with wooden seats for two persons on either side of a gangway. There are wooden shelves near the roof for luggage. These and the spaces under the seats are soon packed, for you must pay for every ounce you register and these are hard times—*tempo di guerra*. I never saw such miscellaneous chattels outside a pawnbroker's shop: fire-irons and kettles and *diavoli*, bulging sacks, all sorts of personal property tied up with infinite string in curtains, bed-spreads or red flannel petticoats.

A mixture of amiability and indifference is observable among the passengers. A man in shirt-sleeves takes infinite pains to poise an old woman's basket so that it is almost sure to topple off a shelf on to somebody's head. A smart young man runs all over the place at a station to telegraph on behalf of a cook who left her bag behind. But the habit is to make yourself as comfortable as you can and not bother about anybody.

For instance, the car was quite full, and a man with a sling had appropriated two seats for himself and his box. A newcomer strolled up, and said, " Permission? " waiting for him to move. The sling-man squeezed himself against his box, leaving space for about half a child. The newcomer tried to sit on the edge of this space, but it was no good. The other merely remarked, " You see, I have hurt my arm," and this was accepted at once as a sufficient explanation: the newcomer sat on the arm of the seat for the next two hours.

Later on, there was an incident that amused me. A comfortable dame and her chattels occupied two seats in the orthodox way, when a number of people entered and looked inquiringly at the dame. The sling-man now intervened: " Madam, madam," he shouted, from the other end of the carriage, " this is too bad; you really can't be

allowed to occupy the whole carriage in this way." And he proceeded to read her a severe lecture on the enormity of her ways. Evidently a believer in my favourite motto: *Quod licet Jovi non licet bovi.*

Passengers stand about a good deal, and are indifferent to jostles or pushes. When I entered, I saw an empty seat and a carbineer standing beside it.

" Is that seat taken? "

" Yes, it's mine, but please take it."

Everybody talks to everybody else, asking endless questions. I don't think I heard the war mentioned once, though, of course, there was plenty of chatter about individual warriors among their relatives. The sun seemed to be dreaded, for shutters were put up whenever it appeared, but every window remained wide open. What a difference from French trains, where I have had to fight for a breath of fresh air in August.

The first hour or so from Genoa is through Alps that have the stagey effect of nearly all Italian scenery. There are high conical hills surmounted by improbable towers, deliberately inaccessible villages, all the crude colours of chromolithographs. Then, all of a sudden, come the fat, comfortable plains of Lombardy, with vineyards and rice-fields and Indian corn that seemed dwarfish beside what I remembered in Serbia or Hungary. The chief joy of the moment is provided by the cut tomatoes, set out to dry on trays, splashing every village with royal red, dancing about the lanes like giant fireflies on the heads of stately maidens, flamboyant heralds of approaching autumn.

Save for the occasional arrival of wounded, and a few Red Cross staffs at the railway stations, Milan, the moral metropolis of Italy, reveals no cognisance of war. Her many brilliant shops overflow with their wonted array of Europe's best wares; her palatial galleries are thronged with merrymakers far into the night; flags from almost every window suggest high holidays. True, the Apollo has a cinema-show about bayonets, heralded by lurid

pictures of war-scenes, but I wager it would attract the same long queues in piping times. And the Apollo's vast underground saloon is packed from eight till twelve or two at night, quite the cave of harmony of Vauxhall days, with strident singers in red satin, scarlet ladies at little tables, an atmosphere of cigarettes and green liqueurs, denser and ever denser, for there are no windows, and many electric fans only serve to spread the naughty fumes.

With one paltry exception—desultory patter about fighting—all the songs are about love; the convenient rhymes *amore-cuore* recurring with dismal monotony. True, the band plays a selection of " patriotic hymns " as an intermezzo: the Mameli and Garibaldi songs, the Marseillaise, but no British or Russian anthems. The Italians are good imitators of British manners and we all stand up for their royal march, all save a few beer-bibbers with pasty Hunnish faces.

For fivepence you may proceed to an adjoining cave, and stake from 2 francs to 300 francs on a bran-new version of *la boule* or *petits chevaux*. It is called Tennis Ball, and is played with nine live men instead of a machine. Each man has a number on his arm, but the ninth man is marked " Trieste," the equivalent of zero. They strike a ball with a racket at a numbered cloth some ten yards away, and the one who makes the highest score wins. Meanwhile, you have staked counters on a green cloth, backing a single number at 7 to 1, two numbers at 3 to 1, or four numbers (with five against you) at evens. It is tolerated as a game of skill, which it probably is, for the winner must be easy to arrange. One punter won pounds nearly every time, but he may have been a confederate. I won 20 francs, and hurried off to bed.

Other music-halls have similar games, called " skating-ball," " bicycle-ball," and so forth. There the ball is kicked or jerked up to the numbers, and of course long practice must make very perfect, but I allege no dis-

honesty and content myself with saying that it would not be difficult to cheat.

Milan has 6218 taverns or places where they drink: one for every 96 inhabitants, babies included. She is not more drunken than other towns: so supplies an answer to the frowsy fanatics who argue that temperance is promoted by a limitation of licences. If you want to go where the bouse is cheap and good, go to Milan.

I often wonder what luck there would be for a guide-book that only mentioned interesting things, flies in undoubted amber. Anyhow, it would not be cumbrous. Let me deal, for instance, with Milan Cathedral, that marvellous piece of petrified lace with never a whisper of religion about its perpendicular walls of ghostly stalagmites. There are ragged curtains of pink cotton at the doors instead of the rich damask due to an ancient fane. Then the very beautiful old stained glass is rare and fragmentary, lost and overborne amid a wilderness of the pale bottle-green windows so dear to the congregations of Little Bethel. If some Hun is responsible, surely the Milanese are rich and patriotic and artistic enough to make good the loss.

Salt mines convey the effect of the interior of Milan Cathedral, but with purer architecture; on a vaster, almost cosmic scale. But surely immensity dispels devotion. All the intimate perfumes of incense and humanity fade away beyond our ken towards the dim and distant roof. *Les dieux s'en vont:* the Saints soar out of reach.

And I seem to detect a faint spirit of mischief in the builders and decorators and architects—a spirit similar to that which produced the devils of Notre Dame and the gargoyles of Strasburg Cathedral. Those cherubs, with their folded wings and quizzing faces within and without the choir, make mouths like apocalyptic beasts. Then there is a statue of a skeleton-man with a Latin inscription, telling us it was not carved by Praxiteles but

by Mark.[1] Also a tablet with a cross in a circle and Alpha and Omega and whimsical jests about the beginning and the end of infinity—the sort of jests dear to scholiasts and Greek philosophers and other solemn leg-pullers.[2] The bronzes of the great gates are very beautiful at first sight. I do not know or care when they were created, but they have the unreality—it would be too much to say absurdity—of early art. Take David slaying a lion: he is a very goodly youth, and it is a very nice lion, but if this were not ecclesiastical art he might be playing with a poodle.

I love Milan Cathedral and always return to it with joy, though I should never choose it for my orisons. Happily, however, all worshippers are not affected in the same way, for I observed far more devotion than I expected in a northern city. On the north wall was a Saint with a child in carved marble. A woman rubbed the Saint's foot with her hand very carefully, then crossed herself. I followed her example, though I knew not what she asked. The foot, I noticed, had been polished very brightly by the touch of countless hands. A brass crucifix on the gate of a side altar close by had been polished by similar ceremonies.

On emerging, I rejoiced that the war had brought one relief: there were no tourists and, above all, no touts. My thought had scarcely taken shape when I found myself surrounded by five shabby men with very long noses and very flat feet.

"Want a guide, sah? All the post-cards, sah! Show you round."

I reflected that, if I needed a guide to a Christian cathedral, I should prefer one of my own religion.

[1] *Non me Praxiteles sed Marc' finxit agrat.*

[2] CHRISMON SANCTI AMBROSII.

Circulus hic summi continet nomina regis.
Quem sine principio et sine fine vides
Principium cum fine tibi demostret. A ω.

VI. TEARFUL TURIN

TURIN seems to have felt the war more than any other place in Italy, so perhaps one must not wonder that she contained so many neutralists. German commercial influence was very strong and it takes time to call manufactures into being.

When I was in Liguria, every man I met during the bathing-season described Turin as not only the grandest but the merriest city in Italy. It was therefore with feelings of joyful anticipation that I arrived there at ten o'clock at night after months of rustication. Hungry and thirsty, I called a little cab and bade the driver seek out the finest coffee-house in the finest square. The result was miles of ticking taximeter through half-lit streets; at last, a coffee-house with some six burghers beside a drowsy band.

Accidente!

"Oh! but there is a *caffè* with a *caffè-concerto* in Piazza So-and-so."

"*Avanti!*"

A sort of big booth in a twilit square where a hundred sad people accorded feeble applause to dumb-bell exercises. Eventually, I had to dine off biscuits and beer.

There were plenty of fine shops to be seen next day, but they all seemed in a sort of half-mourning. The streets seemed sleepy too.

On the whole I am not tempted to seek Turin again during war-time for relief from my megrims. But I admire her sober patriotism in adapting herself to the gloom of the hour.

VII. VENICE ENTRENCHED

JUST as Blucher, spending his first week-end in London, exclaimed, " Old Gott, vot a city to sack! " so the Huns and Austrogoths must have watered at the mouth when Italy declared war. Even Rheims and Louvain could not offer such tempting morsels to the iconoclast as Venice and Rome. Venice, however, was not caught napping: all possible precautions were taken against methods of barbarism.

It is a new Venice that greets you as you step out from the hot, panting train to the dark dignity of the Grand Canal. No Swiss-German or German-Swiss porters fight for your luggage amid a glitter of gilt lace. You must shout " *Poppe!* " for yourself and be grateful if you attract the last of the slumbering gondoliers. All the big hotels now fly the red cross, so for once you shall see something of real Venetian life in an atmosphere of frizzling fish and polenta and wash-tubs. And what a ghost in ghostland you feel as you proceed with measured plash adown the silent waterway between barred and bolted palaces, windows all blinded with Venetian blinds and never a kindly light of welcome.

At the first shock of war, when the Sunday crowd was suddenly deprived of wonted illuminations, native gaiety asserted itself, candles and fairy-lights replaced electricity, the whole population roamed about singing and chattering or overflowed into barges with lanterns of many colours. But now the etiquette of a war-zone has asserted itself and, unless the moon is good, you must grope your way home after dinner over deserted bridges, through black lanes, past masked shops.

Even in the glare of a summer day, Venice now smiles with subdued joy. Her gardens assert themselves more

brightly, especially after recent rains, with roses, geraniums, and oleanders casting their gay leaves upon the face of sulky waters, and there are pergolas of vines to soothe the fierceness of marble walls. But the songs of the rowers and the fresh swish of their oars have yielded to hammering, knocking, nailing, grinding, banging all day long; the dim religious scent of incense in the churches is overpowered by tar and mortar and the disturbance of mediæval dust.

For Venice, Mistress of mediæval art as well as Queen of the sea, is girding her armour on. Like the army of Italy, she has donned a vesture of grey-green, prettier as well as more practical than the old crude khaki of South African memory. Just as, in Holy Week, the more signal emblems veil themselves in respectful mourning for the Passion, so now, in war-time, the monuments of Venice hide in hoods as though to proclaim sympathy with the nation's anxiety. We no longer see their lovely faces, but we know they are there, and somehow they seem more human, more divine in their mysterious mood.

As usual, our first visit is to Saint Mark's, compared by materialistic Ruskin to a golden missal bound in alabaster, now re-covered in grey-green cloth as though for a lending library. The venerable mosaics on the lunettes are blotted out by modern masonry, the golden cupolas are shapeless bags, the pillars and arches have become a brick fortress that goes on to engulf all that fairy portico of the Doges' Palace hard by. Perhaps the worst shock of all: where are the four famous horses of golden bronze, brought from Constantinople to defy the world through seven centuries from the portals of Saint Mark? It was a sad scene the other day, when a silent crowd watched their descent for conveyance to a safer stable; recalled their last and only descent when they were stolen by Buonaparte, the Attila of another age; recalled also and anticipated the joy of their glorious restoration. And the horses seemed to share in the humiliation, anxious though still proud as

they swung through the air, and were mocked—a Calvary of cavalry—on trestles as though they stood part of a merry-go-round.

The interior of the cathedral is painful in a different way. When we pack up all our treasures there is usually a sense of sadness, even though we are glad and wise to depart. Sadness and uncertainty. Will the depository-people deal kindly with the things we love? Moreover, Saint Mark's has always imposed a special awe, architectural as much as religious, an awe shared by the cathedral of Barcelona perhaps, but not by the fanes of Milan or Paris or Westminster. And the profanation seems worse than what Cromwell's troopers or Turkish infidels could have brought. Those fourteen peerless statues on the architrave—Saint Mark, the Blessed Virgin, and the twelve Apostles—might be fat white slugs or crawling caterpillars or chrysalids of giant moths or piles of swallows' nests or formless babies or stalagmites in shrouds, anyhow something more suited to a charnel-house. The whole holy house has become a warehouse, a war-house. Everywhere all the apparatus of street-fighting, heaps and heaps of heavy sandbags, damp and swollen and unpleasant, a crawling plague of fat white rats that huddle against the porphyries and malachites and alabasters, throttle the carved columns, scale walls, bury pulpit, choir, altars, and baptistery. Such is our first impression of the splendid bulwarks which Italian foresight provides against probable forays of the Hun. Forget that here is a holy of holies, regard Saint Mark's as packed up for Italy's journey to her promised land, remember that Italians, already famous as the best restorers in the world, are now proving themselves the prime protectors.

If you murmur at the way in which they have smothered and boxed and sandbagged the divine loggetta of Sansovino at the foot of the immortal campanile, recall how very lately both loggetta and campanile were but a heap

of crumbling dust, every fragment of which was collected and numbered and put together until the knowing ones —the *conoscenti*—vow the new is better than the old.

Wander where you will in Venice now, from sandbag to sandbag, and you cannot refuse the highest praise to the art which has been used to conceal Venetian art from the enemy's aim. Domes have been coped by roofs that slope at an angle of sixty degrees: for there be two sorts of bomb, and the sort used against cathedrals can be made to ricochet harmlessly away. Sixty men have been hard at work for nearly three months at the Doges' Palace, which is now just like any other fortress. Everything beautiful or delicate has been immured. You remember the gracious wells by Nicolo de Conti and Alberghetti in the Doges' yard—they and their moulded bronze now masquerade as rubbish heaps amid a wilderness of refuse. The treatment of nearly seven thousand square yards of old masters—including a Tintoretto longer than a cricket distance—the unframing and rolling of them around sticks thirty-one inches in diameter; all the cares of conveyance to sanctuary; these and a thousand other details of salvage have been organised with infinite pains that for once do really amount to genius. And there has been this reward, that the abasement of the masterpieces from the ceilings of the Doges' Palace has revealed unsuspected perfections. Subtleties that only teased, when you had to crane your neck, now entrance at close quarters, and the world is promised a view on the line before they are skied again after the war.

After the war! Ah! to be there when the Spouse of the Sea shall arise and shake her cerements.

VIII. TUSCANS

THERE is at every frontier a subtle sensation that makes travellers aware that they are entering a new land. This was no less real on entering Tuscany from the Province of Genoa. Somehow, the people who entered my third-class carriage were different.

It was perhaps the accident that Dante happened to write in Tuscan which raised that dialect to the dignity of Italian language. Venetian or Neapolitan would have run it very close, for they have literatures of their own and are softer, methinks more musical. In any case, whatever the merits of the Tuscan dialect, they cannot be extended to the Tuscan voice. This may not be quite so harsh and strident as the Genoese, but it is certainly less homely, and there are certain vagaries of pronunciation that emphasise the discords. For instance, the hard *c* becomes a guttural *h* almost as alarming as the Hun's *ch :* thus harmless words like *casa, cosa, capito* degenerate into *khasa, khosa, khapito.* It is rather distracting at first. Passport formalities had already accustomed me to hearing my birthplace, Chichester, pronounced Kick-a-stair, but Khikhestair sounded almost hysterical.

Florence is too much of a show-place, and has a climate like that of the Carse of Gowrie, too hot in summer, too cold in winter, and lacking the grace of God all the year round. But Leghorn is an old friend, and I always return thither with joy. Mr. Montgomery Carmichael, who adorns Leghorn as British Consul, is not only the most charming of men but a fountain of knowledge and an ornament of literature. His mellifluous volume, *In Tuscany*, says the last word on the graces and beauties of Tuscany in time of peace. I have abstained from reading books on Italy during my wanderings, so as not to imbibe

other men's prejudices, but I could not resist the pleasure of returning to Mr. Carmichael's fragrant prose. Starting to walk from Monte Carlo to Montenegro and failing to reach my destination before it was swallowed up by the Austrogoths, it was a consolation to arrive as far as Monty Carmichael.

Leghorn exhibits the Tuscans at their best: amiable, energetic, patriotic, splendid types of modern Italians. Like Salandra, who is said to have been born mature and was thus spared the trouble of growing up, Leghorn has no need to change, and I find it as I left it in 1897 with the same man to mix my bitters before lunch, the same wonderful sweetmeats for Christmas at Corradini's (dates and prunes stuffed with marchpane), the same exquisite bronze statue of the four Moors, the same soft scenery of " Little Venice " and its dainty canals, perhaps even the same cab-horses.

Here is an illustration of Tuscan politeness. When two men walk the streets together in Italy, the superior walks on the right. In the case of two equals, there is always a great contest of courtesy, such as one sees over the question of precedence at a pot-house door. To clinch matters on these occasions, a genial Tuscan insists on the left hand because of his deaf ear. A British admiral (Prince Ludwig von Battenberg) once walked about Leghorn with a middy on his right, for he had the Briton's contempt of continental etiquette. At once the Consul was bombarded with questions about the young Royal Highness on board the ship. Could it be the Prince of Wales? No, it was Midshipman Easy. Impossible! How could Mr. Easy take precedence of a Serene Highness?

It was in Tuscany that I discovered the excellence of Italian water. Most people are probably unaware, but periods of teetotalism have taught me that local waters all possess a different taste. I used to scoff in Serbia when I was asked how I liked the water at each place; then I discovered that it varies as much as the climate. In old

days one dared not drink water in Italy or London. Now progress has interfered to protect the poor, for in Italy poverty is connoted by the phrase " they can only drink water."

Another change in Italy is the suppression of stinks. When my godfather was taken to Venice or Rome some sixty years ago, his father asked, " Arthur, do you remember anything of all these treasures of art and visions of beauty that I took you to see in your childhood? " " Yes, father, I remember that smell." Even twenty years ago, the streets of most Italian towns and villages were usually unpleasant. Now, after overrunning the greater part of the peninsula, I can recall no offence to my nostrils, save perhaps occasionally at Elba.

IX. ELBA

ONE reason why so few people go to Elba (except as prisoners of war) is that it is difficult of access.

The Leghorn-Rome express dropped me at Campiglia, a dreary junction. Thence a small local train (like a big tram) meandered through meadows to Piombino, which, after a funny little history under miscellaneous masters, is now one of the seven dreariest towns in the world. Stacks of gloomy chimneys, smoke, streets like St. Helens, unsympathetic stares.

A small boy shouldered my bag (I had found it impossible to remain permanently without luggage) and led the way to a quay about a quarter of a mile off. Two ladies, a few peasants, and some soldiers joined me at the foot of a flight of steps by the water's edge. There we waited for nearly an hour in the rain, while two long bumboats heaved and rolled close by. The steamer lay outside the apology for a harbour in some distress. At last everybody's luggage was picked up and carried back to the town: my small boy explained that the boatmen refused to brave the waves.

Another trudge over the slushy cobbles to a sad inn with no one about. It had an open door, a short corridor, a desk, and a flight of stairs. There the weatherbound travellers and their porters stood for ages, taking turns to press an electric bell. At last some of us strolled upstairs and found a wandering housemaid, who was too pretty to be scolded; I gather we were expected to choose our own rooms. Mine was already occupied by fleas.

There was a big dining-room and a long menu, but everything was nasty; I had to send away dish after dish; the wine was sour; the macaroni was like string, and so

was the chicken; even the bread was bad—an unpleasant surprise, for the war-bread is usually delicious, of a clammy kind, recalling brown home-made loaves. My bill was a very long one, but amounted to a mere trifle, for every rejected item had been struck out by the manager unasked.

Next morning I allowed plenty of time to go down to the quay, but was told at the last moment that the steamer would start from Old Port. There be three starting-places for Elba according to the severity of the elements: first, the alleged harbour, whence bumboats will not always venture to the steamer; worse weather, Old Port; worst of all, Baratti. The weather is nearly always bad in the Elban Channel, but the degree of badness is not announced long before the start. So I had to splash pretty quickly through a sort of marsh for about a mile in order to reach Old Port in time. Quite a small crowd, chiefly spectators, encumbered a narrow wooden pier. Passengers jumped into the heaving bumboats and their luggage was thrown after them with good aim. A rollicking row to the steamer. Then the sport began.

The steamer and a bumboat rose and sank as though trying to dodge one another: when one was high in air the other was deep in the hollow of the waters. At intervals they passed rapidly, so that one passenger at a time had an off-chance of leaping from the seat of the bumboat on to the slippery gangway of the steamer. If he arrived safely a wave usually followed to hurry him up. It is quite exciting sport and I felt proud to come on board no wetter than the waist.

Imagine the enjoyment of nervous old ladies. Two or three bumboatmen hold them while the steamer's crew join in conflicting injunctions, all yelling the Italian equivalents of "Now, Mum!" and "Yo-heave-ho!" Then, pushes and liftings and more yells, and somehow or other the human bundle is hoisted on deck, where other willing hands roll her about from seat to seat.

Accidents occur from time to time, but are rarer than one would imagine. After all, a ducking does not do much harm, and the list of drownings is small. I was told of a man who bade his wife jump about two seconds too soon, thinking she would take two seconds to make up her mind, but, being a dutiful spouse, she obeyed instantly, struck the gangway with her head and died in consequence.

Considering how alarming the scene must have been to all save the oldest salts, the behaviour was good. One or two women screamed as they jumped; many of either sex were ghastly pale; several decided to return in the bumboats. I shall not soon forget one lady of thirty or so. She stood upright on the seat with a smile on her face, refusing all helping hands: " No, no, leave me alone; I shall manage much better by myself." And at the very nick of time she was off and up with scarcely a splash. Loud cheers.

The steamers are very old, but do not roll excessively and usually reach Portoferraio in less than two hours. There are no lights on deck and only an old lamp in the cabin, so reading is impossible on winter evenings. The only refreshments available are nips of medicinal brandy.

The Elban capital is different from any town I know. There are vague suggestions of Gibraltar, with a sense of being shut up in a fortress; some of the steep staircase-streets recall Malta; but somehow you do not feel in a town at all. The nearest approach to a comparison is an exhibition building without any exhibits or shows.

On leaving the landing-stage you pass through the great walls of the fortress by a passage wide enough to admit one of the small local cabs. This might be the turn-stile to the show; and you do pay something if you have imported foodstuffs from the mainland (here always called " the continent "). Then you walk everywhere on flagstones, generally up and down stairs or inclined planes, along corridors, through tunnels. The bit of garden, or rather shrubbery, in the square where Buonaparte drilled

his guards, seems as though it ought to be roofed in with glass.

Save places of refreshment for sailors, there are few shops, and those of the kind found in big villages. You must procure almost everything from the continent, and there are no regular messengers. Hawkers come over frequently and drive a thriving trade, chiefly in female clothing.

The town hall, which includes the library and court of justice, is a big building plastered with memorial tablets: one with the voting on March 15, 1860, when Tuscany was united to Italy; others to Guerrazzi, a poet of the Garibaldian period; to Garibaldi himself; to Victor Emmanuel II.; to Victor Hugo, who lived here as a boy; and to Napoleon Buonaparte. There is also a tablet to Ferrer, the Spanish anarchist martyr, oddly enough on the police station. All have flowery inscriptions, displaying Elban pride in the past.

The drawback of Portoferraio (as of the whole island) is the difficulty of egress. If you want to take a walk you must first clamber downstairs to the watergate and go along the quays outside the walls, or to the landgate and cross a moat by a drawbridge; then you have a long stretch of slums and munition factories: all this before you reach the country. Or else you can turn to the right after the drawbridge, pass an incipient garden beside the sea, and enjoy a really rough scramble along the coast. A friend once challenged me to take this path after dinner and walk right round the island, some sixty miles, but luckily he did not offer to stake enough to tempt me, for I should certainly have lost my way as well as my bet. Even in broad daylight, the path suddenly and frequently appeared to end in a farmyard among excitable watch-dogs.

The walk, however, is pleasant until daily habit has rendered it monotonous. Elba is not beautiful, but it is certainly very pretty. The steep hills, rising to more than

3000 feet, have fantastic patches of red and yellow among the green and purple scrub, and are soothing with their varied shades in all the vicissitudes of Elba's changeable climate, in rain and mist and sunshine. Fragrant also are the strongly-scented shrubs, akin to the Corsican *maquis*, through which one passes for miles—box, myrtle, tamarisk, rosemary, thyme, and other healthy old-world smells.

Portoferraio does not enjoy similar fragrance. Indeed, the whiffs from the harbour, percolating through the lower part of the town and sometimes lasting for days, tempted me to rechristen the whole island Smelba, until I was distracted by the incessant peals of the churches and thought of Belba. In Buonaparte's day, the satirists had a ruder rhyme, formed by affixing an aspirate.

All life at Portoferraio gyrates round the High Furnaces (*Alti Forni*) or Munitions Factory; everybody has or seeks a job there; it is a strong government within a government. Once upon a time there was a man named Del Bono. He made millions (of francs); bought estates, including Buonaparte's at San Martino; bought a hotel, lock, stock, and barrel, after dinner for fun, and gave it to somebody for fun; bought people; began big public works that were obviously unproductive; became quite the little King; then libelled the High Furnaces in a local paper; is now a penniless exile.

Commonplace critics talk of Portoferraio's looks being spoiled by the High Furnaces. But surely they add beauty and romance to the scenery, when you behold them across the bay belching tongues of flame in the night; and their black chimneys have the majesty of cypresses. Why do æsthetes always descry the useful?

There is a service of small motor-omnibuses to the principal parts of the island, at rather inconvenient hours; they travel with almost reckless speed over the excellent roads, which slash all the landscapes like white ribbons.

Carriages are fair, but not cheap. I fancy the island will long remain insular.

The Elbans have a reputation for mildness, probably due in part to their remoteness and in part to their aloofness. Crimes of violence are rare, but rudeness or at least roughness is on their surface and they are canny to the verge of greed. They fish well, but none of their many masters have induced them to take advantage of their soil. Buonaparte was laughed at when he tried. They do not like strangers, and a man from the mainland is considered a stranger just as though he came from England or Timbuctoo.

They treat their wives like Orientals: it is not unusual to stipulate in a marriage contract that the wife shall be allowed to take two walks a week. They are surprised if their wives are asked out to dinner with them. I remember a party at a consulate. The table had been carefully planned. At the last moment, a man strolled in alone.

" Where is your wife? "

" Oh! " he laughed, " she is much better minding the children."

It was only after about ten minutes' argument that he could be induced to go and fetch her. Yet he had accepted the invitation for both.

They have no idea of keeping appointments or answering letters or apologising when their rudeness puts you to inconvenience.

As for truthfulness, I remember telling an Elban lady some anecdote in which an Englishman hit somebody who had called him a liar. She could not understand wherein the offence lay.

At last she said, " Yes, I believe I have heard the French also have ideas of that kind."

The same lady remarked publicly about a servant who had displeased her, " I'll see the girl doesn't get another place."

" How will you prevent it? "

" Oh! I shall soon hear where she goes, and then I'll send anonymous letters until she is dismissed; and I'll go on whatever places she gets."

The Elbans are a primitive people, whom Italy must colonise after the war.

One of my first drives was to Capoliveri, a defiant-looking village in the hills. In old days it was a sanctuary (*Caput Liberum*) for debtors and outlaws; Buonaparte had to send troops thither before he could extort taxes; the reputation for restiveness still survives. So does the reputation for a heady red wine called aleatico. We cracked a bottle at the inn and my companion observed that it was not so good as some he had had last year. A few minutes later, the landlord stalked in with a truculent scowl.

" Who said my wine was not good? " he roared, almost with his hand to an imaginary sword-hilt.

From Capoliveri I drove on to Portolongone, which still bears traces of Spanish domination. There are Spanish types of face to be seen and Spanish names over the shops.

The landmark is a terrible white prison set upon a hill behind the town. Almost endless rows of little blind windows, long silent corridors, peeps into cells where men spend long years in silent solitude. You go away with feelings of horror that haunt you during many a restless night. Visitors are not welcomed by the officials, for even the sound of strange steps outside the cells unsettles the convicts and renders them insubordinate; but the convicts rejoice to see a fresh face, to receive a whiff of the outside world, to hear their own voices again when they bid you good-day. White and grim and ghastly they look; many go mad; others succumb to consumption. You are moved to pity though you know that they have all committed the most awful crimes and that punishments must be severe where there is no death penalty. Apart

from the sentence of silence, they are no worse off than other convicts. The cleanliness and order are admirable; every care is taken of them; it is a model prison. Is it not a strange problem of psychology: there are many monks and even nuns who vow themselves to eternal silence and find supreme happiness in its observance; here the very same mode of life is intolerable torture?

There is another prison at Portoferraio, with a dungeon on a tongue of land jutting out into the sea, a real old-fashioned prison of romance, now no longer used. Here Passanante, the man who tried to kill King Humbert, was confined.

I took many pleasant drives about Elba: to Rio Marina and the iron mines, which worried Buonaparte intensely; to Marciana Marina, whence is a pretty excurtion to La Madonna and Buonaparte's country cottage; to Roman ruins across the bay. But there is a sameness about the hills and towns and villages of Elba and one's mind tires of the same diet every day. One tires too of the constant mention of Buonaparte. Even if one admired that Kaiser, the mere facts that he lived here, walked there, played practical jokes on yonder beach afford little food for thought. Nor are there Napoleonic relics to be picked up.

Some years ago an American enthusiast sent emissaries to scour the island. They bought up everything that anybody asserted to be Napoleonic. They posed nearly all the inhabitants to reconstitute Napoleonic scenes for the cinematograph: Napoleon landing, Napoleon going to church, Napoleon out fishing, almost down to Napoleon in his bath.

I should not have remained so long if I had not made an important discovery in the public library at Portoferraio.

X. BUONAPARTE'S BOOKS

THE zeal of Napoleon Buonaparte's innumerable biographers has left very little to be gleaned anywhere, least of all at Elba.

But the remains of his library in the Town Hall at Portoferraio throw some sidelights which the biographers have overlooked. It is true that one of them, Mr. Norwood Young, devotes a dozen lines to the books in his *Napoleon in Exile at Elba* (1914), but his visit must have been hurried, judging by his many inaccuracies.

I spent many days in the library and turned over the pages of all the books for a certain purpose.

This purpose was inspired by a passage in the memoirs of Pons, Buonaparte's bluff confidant and best Elban biographer.

Pons had been reading *Télémaque* in the summer-house of his garden at Rio, and had pencilled some passages that accorded with his Republican views:

"A king should have nothing above other men, save that which may be necessary to give him relief in his troublesome duties. . . . I was reduced to finding satisfaction in the fact that I still possessed a few soldiers and comrades who consented to share my misfortunes in this savage land. It was now my only home, for I could never hope to see again that fortunate island where the gods allowed me to be born and to reign. It is thus that all kings shall fall who abandon themselves to their desires and to the counsels of flatterers."

Pons left the book open and went for a stroll. On his return he found it closed. Looking at it again, he discovered that his passages had been scored again in ink, and that various other pages had had their corners turned down.

This was evidently Buonaparte's work, and Pons grew nervous. But Buonaparte laughed when he saw him, saying, " Your pencil-marks showed that you had me in mind, but Fénelon manufactured divine kings.[1] Kings are only men, after all, and the greatest of them are those who are least imperfect."

Taking this incident as a cue, I searched Buonaparte's books at the Town Hall, and found that many of them had been dog-eared and pencilled in the margins. The marks are mainly of four kinds—an angle pointing to the print, two vertical and by no means parallel lines, curves, and zigzags. I wonder whether most readers are like myself. When I set out to mark a book I begin with a sort of code, intending some marks to express approbation, others to remind me of what I want to quote or refute. But after a time the code tends to go astray. It has certainly done so in Buonaparte's case, for I defy any one to classify his selections according to their marks.

This accords with his notorious lack of concentration. Many writers have recorded how he never by any chance read a book right through to the end, and there is plenty of evidence of this in his library. For instance, the first volume of Rulhière's *History of the Anarchy of Poland* (Paris, 1807) has pencil marks on almost every page, but the other three volumes do not appear to have been opened, showing how quickly his intense interest evaporated. Often, again, the first few pages were heavily scored and a book was thrown aside.

Most of the marked passages refer to himself — or rather to his inflated opinion of himself, to the strength and weakness of " the great " or the sadness of exile.

The following, for instance, from *Gil Blas*, is almost pathetic: " I am very far from being satisfied with my lot. I have lost my position, which I found very useful, and

[1] One of Fénelon's commentators here detects a reference to King James II.

I have no friends with sufficient credit to find me a permanent one."

While he was at Elba he tried to curry favour with the English, showing special attentions to English visitors, paying compliments to our chivalry, and expressing a desire to transfer his exile to our shores. But his sympathies find little expression among his books. There are translations of Miss Burney's works in twelve volumes and Miss Edgeworth's in three; Adam Ferguson's *History of the Progress and Fall of the Roman Republic* (Paris, 1791, seven vols.); *The History of the House of Austria*, by William Coxe, Archdeacon of Wilts (Paris, 1810, five vols.); Major Symes's *British Mission to the Kingdom of Ava in* 1795 (Paris, 1800, three vols.); a *Journey from India to Mecca* (Paris, 1797, two vols.); Young's *Night Thoughts* (Paris, 1809, two vols.); and the following novels: *Charles Barimore, The Children of the Abbey*, by Miss Regina Maria Roche, and *Julia, or the Vaults of Mazzini*, by Anne Radcliffe.

Mr. Norwood Young draws attention to what he calls " a school-book," and deduces from the fact that most of the pages are cut that Buonaparte may have turned them over in mild curiosity. Most of the pages, however, have been cut in nearly all the books. Nor is this a school-book. It is called *Cent Pensées d'une Jeune Anglaise*, by A. J. Lemierre (Paris, 1802), and has a very bad English translation on the opposite pages. The English title is *The Hundred Thoughths* (sic) *of a Young Lady, to which are added Moral Apologues and Miscellanies; and also an Allegorical Description of a Young Man's Journey to the Land of Happiness, with a Map and Plate.* The " Thoughths " and Apologues are quaintly priggish when they are not too silly, but the coloured map of the young man's journey is quite refreshing. He starts through The Ocean of Experience, passes The Rocks of Obstinacy and The Island of Dissipation, and reaches the Land of Remorse, which resembles the coast near Salonica. Here

he finds he has gone the wrong way, so he returns by Cape Repentance to the Archipelago of Promises and The Isles of Endeavour, Courage, and Success, past The Sands of Patience to Constancy Coast in the Land of Knowledge, which is very near to the terra firma of Happiness, being separated only by the Torrent of Passions. This being thick-set with the rocks and whirlpools of Pride and Presumption, would be unnavigable without the lighthouses of Reason and Religion.

Out of Buonaparte's 261 volumes of history, only one deals with England—an account of the Wars of the Roses.

He had a square Anglo-French dictionary and an advanced English grammar by William Cobbett, both in stout blue calf, but he never looked at either. It was only on his way to St. Helena that he made absurdly futile attempts to acquire our tongue.

However, he seems to have cherished wistful thoughts for English women, if we may judge by a book-mark in Voltaire's *Pucelle*, drawing attention to an engraving with the legend:

D'un gros baiser la barbouille et lui dit,
J'aimai toujours les filles d'Angleterre.

(He smears her with a big kiss and says, " I always liked the daughters of England.")

Perhaps Buonaparte showed this to the English lady whom he received and sent on with particular recommendations to Pons at the mines of Rio.

Whatever else he may have been, he was certainly not a linguist. Even Italian, which was more or less his native tongue, he spoke very imperfectly. For instance, he puzzled one of his audiences by inventing the word " *sommiglio* " (from the French " *sommeil* ") for " *sonno* " (sleep).

He was also a shocking speller. Though he professed to be a great admirer of Ossian, he transformed the poet's name into Océan when he drew up a list of the books he wanted to take to Egypt.

For his more serious reading, he had collections of speeches (Cicero's for choice) and collections of extracts from the classics, all translated, of course, for his education had been neglected and he never caught it up. A remnant of loyalty to his fatherland led him to collect an undue number of books on Corsica, but not to read them.

There are numerous manuals, mostly paper-bound, dealing with agriculture, astronomy, architecture, botany, chemistry, geography, mathematics, natural history, physiology, and such special subjects as cotton-dyeing and the blacksmith's art. These were consulted when he expected distinguished visitors or was about to make one of his periodical progresses through the island. He would read up two or three points very carefully, lead the conversation round to them, and then astonish everybody by his infinite knowledge of every detail.

His military books were very few; perhaps, as his admirers would tell us, because he knew more about warfare than any books could tell him. A work on tactics (*Essai Général de Tactique*, par Guibert, Londres, 1772, two vols.) has, however, been marked extensively in the first volume.

There is also a book called *Galerie Militaire* (Paris, An XIII.—1805, seven vols.), consisting of biographies of famous generals since the Revolution. Buonaparte's only mark is at the life of Legrand, who was to have commanded in the invasion of England in 1803.

Another congenial study is provided by an *Histoire des Flibustiers*, translated from the German of d'Archenholtz (Paris, An XII.—1804), but the Corsican ogre (or the German author) cannot have had much to learn about filibustering or piracy.

XI. HOUSEKEEPING AT PORTOFERRAIO

HOTEL prices are elastic in Elba, as they are elsewhere. A friend told me that he arrived at an inn and asked, "How much, everything included?"

"Eight shillings a day."

"I'll give you four."

"Very well."

This ready acceptance seemed a proof of dishonesty, but another innkeeper told me, "No, I could cater for you at eight shillings a day and also at four, but the catering would be very different." As a matter of fact an English lady was taken in there at 2s. 6d. and fared like everybody else. So did local functionaries who lived at home and came for all their meals at 48s. the month. I was charged 6s. a day.

Then I heard of a little flat at the top of the hill, occupied by some mechanics who were about to leave. They only paid 16s. a month, but I was charged 48s. because that had been the rent of two English ladies once upon a time. The landlady told me a story about them:

"They made a strange soup out of oats. When I first saw it, I thought it was a poultice. They said it was very nice and they insisted on making one for me. Faugh! how horrid it was! I just tasted it and threw it away. Even the cat would not touch it. They asked me how I liked it and I had to confess I was not used to that kind of food. So they suggested I should give it to some poor woman. Imagine the face of any woman, however poor, if she were offered that stuff!" *Lèse*—porridge!

That landlady was an odd character with a tempestuous past. She hovered about all day in a blue dressing-gown and felt slippers, grumbling about the cold when warm winds blew, forever hunting particles of dust on

the furniture. Her old invalid mother was dressed as a peasant, lived on scraps in the kitchen, and did nearly all the work.

At noon one day, I heard the landlady cry down the corridor in her raucous tones, "Mam-ma! Mam-ma! come here and clean my shoes."

A pleading, tremulous voice, the voice of a great-grandmother, replied, "But I have just begun to eat and I am so hungry and tired and ill."

"I can't help that. I am expecting company and I must have my shoes cleaned. Come here at once."

My flat had a private entrance out of the landlady's corridor and was approached by wooden stairs—little wider than a ladder. The chief charm was a tiled terrace with a gorgeous view over the bluest of bays towards a Turner landscape. A white rabbit with pink eyes disported himself there and frustrated my attempts at gardening. But I wallowed in air and sunshine, luxuries begrudged in a land where all live behind closed shutters to save their furniture from fading. And I felt almost in the Orient with my wide panorama of neighbours' housetops.

The flat consisted of a big room partitioned into dormitory and refectory. A passage led to the kitchen where my servant Giannina slept. The walls were whitewashed and adorned with chromo Madonnas. The floors were tiled, like all in the island, to repel insects in summer. Giannina came in every morning with a watering-pot to irrigate the pavement before she swept it. If a visitor brought in a speck of mud on his boots she was instantly after it with a damp cloth. At her last place she had to do out all the spare rooms every day, hang the sheets out of window, and remake the unused beds.

One of the many economies of a flat is that all your washing is done at home. In a hotel, the laundry-bill alone would amount to Giannina's full wages. The only drawback was that my terrace often became uninhabit-

able for the array of damp clothes flapping in the breeze. Elbans who are not blest with terraces disport their washing on strings outside their windows, so that the streets seem to celebrate perpetual festivals.

Italian kitchens are a source of wonder to foreigners. The range consists of a sort of table with oblong pans fitted into the top. These are filled with charcoal, which is lighted with a scrap of paper whenever anything has to be cooked. Underneath are small chimneys for ventilation and the cook wafts a wicker fan vigorously to keep the charcoal burning. When a special blaze is required, she applies a curved funnel, which is here called *diavolo* (devil), but in Egypt *Afrit* (a bad Jinnee). We also had a portable oven that acquired a certain amount of heat when placed over a pan. This range is not inconvenient, for, with plenty of pans, you can cook plenty of dishes at once; and there is the economy of not having to keep a kitchen fire roaring all day long.

My landlady suddenly went mad, so I moved to a better flat in a street approached by 133 stairs from the lower town. It belonged to an old sea-dog and was overfurnished with hideous curios. He began by asking 24s. a month, but on reflection raised this to 32s. I had a big sitting-room with two windows, a decent bedroom, a kitchen, and my own front door. Giannina slept on a couch in the sitting-room.

Giannina told me she could read but not write, so I had to act as amanuensis when she sent the greater part of her wages to her aged mother near Rimini. Like most people who can't write, she had a wonderful memory. She came in every morning with a book and reeled off all yesterday's purchases for me to set down. Her balance was always there to the last halfpenny and she started off for market with a song on her lips. When she succeeded in beating down a market-woman she would turn her kitchen into a concert-room all the afternoon.

She was a great believer in retail-trading, as will be

seen from one morning's accounts taken at random: 10½ oz. meat, 1.20; 4 lemons, 30c.; 3½ oz. coffee, 55c.; 10½ lbs. sugar, 55c.; 1 lb. *polenta* (Indian corn flour), 20c.; 1 lb. bread, 35c.; milk, 30c.; 10 rusks, 25c.; 2 lbs. potatoes, 20c.; 2 eggs, 35c.; *galetta* (a sort of ship's biscuit for grating), 20c.; 4½ lbs. charcoal, 40c.; apples, 30c.; 4½ oz. Parmesan cheese, 45c.; 1 lb. macaroni, 40c.; preserved tomatoes, 20c.; 3½ oz. butter, 45c.; 1 pint of oil, 85c. Total, 8½frs.

This is an unusually heavy account, for all the small stocks seem to have run out simultaneously. The average daily expenditure for Giannina and me was 4frs. 25c. (say, 2s. 9d., for the exchange was then up to 31frs. 50c. to the £), and this included 2 quarts of wine a week for Giannina at 70c. the quart. I found the local wine so nasty that I was driven to lemons and water.

With rent and wages, my household amounted to no more than 33s. 3d. a week. My rent was higher than a native would have paid and I might have saved a little by dealing at the Co-operativa, stores intended for workers at the High Furnaces, but easy of access to all—easy of access, yes, but the crowd is such that purchasers must often wait three hours to be served; even seven hours have been known at busy times.

I cannot say I fared well, for Elban supplies are scanty, and perhaps I paid a little more than the minimum at an inn. But there were no palms itching to be greased, no distracting noises, no babbling neighbours. I had the independence, if not the comfort, of home.

There is an astonishing spirit of feudal familiarity in Italian households. The servants have far less liberty and comfort than ours, are indeed much more akin to slaves, but they are not kept at the same distance, they almost rank as poor relations.

I used at one time to dine a good deal with a Tuscan count and never ceased to wonder at the liberties taken, quite as a matter of course, by his domestics. A grim,

superannuated nurse would always stand behind his chair at meals, controlling what the grandchildren ate, joining boisterously in the conversation, correcting inaccurate statements. The butler would put down a dish to answer her and a great argument would ensue, while the whole family listened in silence.

There was also an ancient retainer who had served there all his life. He always called the Contessina (aged forty-three) " thou " when no strangers were in hearing, and he would absolutely prevent her going out in bad weather unless she made a great fuss and convinced him of the importance of her engagements.

The more modern type of servant, who is not a permanency but flits from place to place, has a sort of *camorra* or secret trade-union. If she is dismissed she can prevent other girls from taking her place; if she were refused a character, she might render life unbearable.

Honesty is perhaps on a level with that of other countries, but no special stress is laid upon it. A Portoferraio lady came in to lunch. " Sestilia," she said, " you have forgotten the wine."

" Signora, there isn't any."

" Nonsense, a two-quart flask came in last night."

" Look at it yourself, signora, it is quite empty now."

" Then bring me water."

Presently the lady's husband brought in a friend and offered vermouth. But, on going to the cupboard, he found that a new bottle of vermouth and another of strega (a strong liqueur resembling benedictine) had both been emptied. Where were they? The servant put her thumb into her mouth and calmly said she did not know.

A man employed for odd jobs in the same household was told, " If you must help yourself to my wine, I wish you would not fill it up with water. I don't like weak wine any more than you do yourself."

The only answer was " *Capito* " (I have understood).

A girl made the same reply when told to use a spoon instead of her fingers if she wanted to steal apricot jam.

Giannina was an excellent servant, a treasure in kitchen and market, but never dreamed of knocking and sat down unasked. Many well-to-do people only keep one servant, and at Ancona she had to wait on six people and do twelve rooms. When there was a party she would be offered help, but this she refused indignantly, for she liked to bring in the courses herself and see whether the guests enjoyed them. One Christmas eve she cooked for thirty-six people and did all the waiting. In the hurry she dropped the turkey into the soup and the splash scalded her terribly. Her face had to be oiled and bandaged, and she suffered agonies; one of the guests offered to send round for her cook, but the plucky girl insisted on doing everything herself.

One reason may have been that it is the custom for guests to give something every time they come to a meal. This also explains why servants' wages are low in Italy. One pound a month is considered handsome for a general servant and half that is by no means unusual. Many householders seem to take a pride in the amount of tips their servants receive.

Outings are few and irregular. If there is no special work to do, a maid may have three hours off on a Sunday afternoon, but other days she must ask leave before crossing the road. Giannina was allowed out at night only twice during two years at Ancona, and then as a tremendous favour. When she came to me it was Paradise to be allowed to go to the cinematograph every evening.

The smallest jest immediately raises Italian servants to the seventh heaven. Their gaiety is unquenchable, and it is impossible to remain angry with them for long whatever sins they may commit. And they are full of fidelity. No one else must ever dream of robbing you, or they will soon know the reason why.

XII. PORTERS OF THE SEA

ALMOST my only society at Portoferraio consisted of officers in the merchant service, and I think they have a grievance. While the wages of nearly all war-workers have been bounding up, theirs remain almost stationary in spite of all the added labour and anxiety.

I talked with a skipper who made sixteen voyages between America and England during the first twelve months of war. In the neighbourhood of the Channel he had to be on the bridge all day and night with every nerve on edge, and all his officers and crew were on tenter-hooks, straining their eyes and ears for submarines. He saw one at close quarters near the south of Ireland, and only escaped sinking because there was a heavy sea.

It seems a shame that he should remain at much the same wage which was his in piping times, when he was free to sleep all the way in his cabin if he chose, leaving all the work to be done by his chief officer. And all the greater shame when we remember the huge profits now being made by shipping companies. A Danish captain told me that the wages of all his crew had been nearly doubled since the war. His chief officer now receives £20 a month as against a Britisher's £15, his chief engineer £30 as against £18, every sailor £10 as against £9. But the striking difference is in his own case. A British captain now receives about £20 a month. The Dane remains at his old terms of £12 and 3 per cent. on the earnings, but these earnings are now prodigious. For instance, on one voyage from Liverpool to Italy, in December, he cleared £180 in addition to his wages, and he makes six or seven voyages a year. Could not some such system of per-centages be introduced for the benefit of British crews? We are to remember that coal-freights have risen from

7s. to 50s. per ton during the war. Why should all the enormous profits go to the owners?

These captains are simple, friendly folk, eager to welcome you to their cabins, show you photographs of wife and children, and offer you right British hospitality. They read a good deal in a desultory way, weekly papers and novels of the Victorian period and sentimental poetry. One of them was forever fumbling in his pocket-book at odd moments and producing some verses out of a newspaper about the merchant service, " The Porters of the Sea "—a phrase over which he loved to linger. Tears stood in his eyes as, with a wee, wee Scottish accent, he rolled out the rhymes which set forth the unrequited labours of the porters of the sea, their high services for England, the obscurity of their heroism. There was a rattling chorus, " Rolling home—rolling home," that a toper of our acquaintance vowed to adopt as his national anthem.

The mentality of these captains is complex, like that of other big children. They are full of fun and ever ready for a carouse on shore. They have very decided views about religion and politics and propriety. For instance, when I invited one of them to lunch at my lodging, he objected to be seen in my company if I persisted in carrying his wine through the streets of Portoferraio. Another suddenly said he would like to take off his coat and fight me over the dinner-table because I trod on one of his pet corns; whereas yet another immediately drank my health when I enunciated the same sentiments.

Another raised a problem with which I have puzzled many people since.

His ship was sunk by the *Eitel Friedrich* after nearly succeeding in ramming her. He and his crew were taken prisoners and treated like dogs, or rather worse than dogs, with nothing but mouldy black bread and thin coffee for three weeks. Water was very scarce and washing was not to be dreamed of. Then they were all

landed in America, but only on giving their paroles not to serve against Germany during the war. The captain had scarcely given his parole when he sailed for England and volunteered for the British navy.

I confess I looked upon him almost as a criminal when he told me this thing. Of course, many criminals think they are doing right when they are breaking the moral law, and this captain was one of the straightest and most honourable men I have met.

Was he right?

I have put this question to a dozen people, both English and Italian, and they all say, " Perfectly right. He was no more bound than if he had pledged his word to a pirate."

I appealed to a Danish captain, who replied without a moment's hesitation, " I should have done the same thing myself."

Perhaps I am old-fashioned, but I cling to my belief that an Englishman's word is his bond, whatever outrages the enemy may commit. And this is evidently the view of the Admiralty, for he was informed that he could not be accepted for the navy as he had given his parole. How they knew, the captain cannot explain. Perhaps the various governments notify paroles through the United States or some other neutral.

I witnessed a pathetic sight when I was at Portoferraio in November 1915. A mess-boy of seventeen fell down a hatchway and broke his neck just before coming into harbour. The Catholic priest would not bury him because he might be a Protestant. So the minister of the Waldensians was summoned from Rio Marina on the other side of Elba, a genial, perhaps over-genial, gentleman with funds of information about ritual and ecclesiastical history. The funeral was specially pathetic because all the details and surroundings emphasised the unhomeliness of the burial. The unconsecrated portion of the unkempt cemetery with its tablets to other dead mariners,

the gloomy little chapel at the entrance, the plain deal coffin with only a few hastily snatched flowers, the minister in his plain black tweeds reading bits of Bible (impressively enough) in a foreign tongue. It did not seem to me like a funeral at all. But the crew were all there, and the vice-consul, and we felt that we had done all we could to show our respect to a fellow-countryman.

An odd thing about tramp captains is that they all want me as a passenger. During the space of a few weeks I had offers to go to Algiers and Liverpool and Gibraltar for about five shillings a day all found. Or I could have become a mess-boy with wages of £6 10s. a month. Even the Danish captain pressed me to come with him to Baltimore and back. The which only shows how hard up they must be for exotic conversation.

XIII. ROME

I DEVOTED twenty-four hours to Rome in 1888 and forty-eight hours in March 1916, so I can permit myself only a passing paragraph on the Eternal City.

The Hun guide-book, Baedeker, presents alarming bogies of Roman fever, which "is, of course, most prevalent in summer, but also occurs in spring and even in the milder and damper months of winter. . . . Windows should be closed at night." Awful alternative: the insomnia of an airless bedroom or months of malarious misery, delirium, giddy temperatures, doctors' bills, last wills and testaments. "Umbrellas or spectacles of coloured glass (grey, concave glasses to protect the whole eye are best) may be used to advantage when a walk in the sun is unavoidable. Blue veils are recommended to ladies." I can imagine the credulous tourist, thus fearfully and wonderfully arrayed, creeping through the streets from church to church with eucalyptus-sodden kerchiefs to his nose, mistrusting every unusual whiff, casting furtive, suspicious glances at every thread of mist about the Colosseum. I remember something like that frame of mind during a cholera epidemic at Nijni-Novgorod.

As a matter of fact, the alleged Roman fever is only a form of the influenza which threatens everybody everywhere, at Putney no less than at Rome. The leading doctor at Rome says he has not known a case of Roman fever for twenty years. That sounds a quibble, and pneumonia certainly finds many victims among careless people who come to Rome to spend the evening of their days, for the winds are as treacherous as Huns. Otherwise, the climate is cheering and I am told purges are never necessary.

I have made this Philistine digression to reassure travellers. They can live quite happily at Rome without being troubled by its archæological side, ghosts of Cæsars or nightmares of their school books. They need not even look at a Latin grammar. At the same time, they can steep their souls in all the romance of religion. The various Uniat churches are alone worth the long pilgrimage. There, all the most wonderful worship of the golden East is encouraged and developed on the sole condition of acknowledging the Bishop of Rome as Supreme Pontiff. Armenian, Coptic, Orthodox—a score of impressive and mysterious ceremonies may be witnessed in this metropolis of the Mass. And naturally the full fascination of the Roman Church is revealed at Rome. What supreme felicity to withdraw from wars and politics, money and mischief, all the fierce joys of the world, the flesh, and the devil, to the Nirvana of incense and orisons and Gregorian lullabies; minor comfort, too, to consult the "Little Doctor," brightest of jewelled images, in the hour of sickness, to take your pets to the benediction of domestic animals on the Palatine, to share in public lamentations whenever you are of a heavy heart, to find a noble army of Saints ever ready to treat your most trivial concerns. A woman of the people said recently to an Anglican lady: "You Protestants seem to know as much about the Saints as we do, but you make no use of them."

Moreover, Rome has beauties as well as comforts and memories—all those delightfully unexpected beauties, which you may have the pleasure of discovering for yourself without recourse to guides or guide-books. The ordinary idea is that Rome is the most artificial city in the world, the resultant of all the artifices of centuries. As a matter of fact, Rome is splendidly natural. Even the ancients built as the fancy took them, and their monuments are delightful if you see them at random, just as they came and crumbled, without histories and lectures and dates—Rome without tears.

To appreciate Rome, come there, as I did, from Elba, the other Kaiser's island, where one lives or starves on goat and water. Then enter almost any restaurant and feed on the fat of the land even in war-time for next to nothing. Real shops again. Courtesy. Comfort. Luxury. An old friend rang me up and asked me to lunch at his flat. Lunch? no, a banquet to linger in the memory. Real servants with distinction and foresight instead of slap-dash sluts. Deep, thick carpets instead of rarely scrubbed tiles.

Living is not cheap at Rome. I read statistics of war-prices, showing that the increase was only 19 per cent. at Rome compared with anything up to 35 per cent. elsewhere, but residents tell me the Roman prices were higher to start with and housekeeping remains a strain. Fuel has frightened almost all, and embassies as well as hotels went fireless through the winter.

The Romans are gay and kind, quick thinkers, keen politicians, ardent demonstrators. War has relieved them of a tendency to rely too much upon tourists, and they already realise that manufactures are more than monuments.

XIV. THE CAMPAGNA

I RAN frantically round the neighbourhood of Rome searching for a little house.

I had heard much of the glories of the Campagna. Those glories appeal specially to the people who are moved to rhapsodies by Raphael and the moonlit Colosseum and all sorts of sights that they will never understand. At the same time, the Campagna has fairy charms.

You stand on an eminence, at sunset for choice, and survey all sorts of soothing pinks and purples softened by malarious mists—quite a good effort on the part of Nature to overtake the best water-colours. I have seen the same sort of thing on Dartmoor or from the Kalemegdan at Belgrade, but all the Campagna scenery is well staged and shifted—droves of fat, fleecy sheep; really golden lichen on stone walls; ruined towers like hollow trees; the sort of peasants who ought to pipe all the time and sometimes do; exquisitely graceful wine-carts with blue and red revolving hoods of mediæval shape—I should like to drive round the world in one with somebody worth photographing at every stage; the pretty, unhealthy, Grosvenor Gallery sort of picture that would appeal to us if only it had not been admired by unhealthy people; the obvious sunsets; the ever dainty umbrella-pines, which are the secret of the success of Turner and Turneresque engravings. Nice rather than inspiring scenery, nothing robust about it, very foreign to the spirit of the present hour.

The Campagna is exquisite in its way, or would be if life were a perpetual honeymoon. It has a personality. One ought not to miss making its acquaintance. Perhaps I am too squeamish in resenting the tourist trail. Only, the passage of tourists transforms everything. The

natives acquire new poses, a different kind of beggar appears, there is a zeal for the exhibition of the unnecessary; hotels replace plain native cookery with mock French menus; you cannot move a yard without being pestered to take a cab; you are the fair game, long expected by all.

Patriotic Italians are as keen as anybody to do away with the dependence on tourists, which lingers in certain districts, round Rome and Naples, wherever there is a cathedral or a picture-gallery or a star in Philistine Baedeker. The frontiers of Philistia are very easy to cross. The town of X is artificial and full of cormorants; half a mile away, the village of Y is charming and natural and really Italian. Real Italy is Heaven; Baedeker Italy is an excrescence that must pass away after the war. I should like to revisit the Campagna after the burial of Baedeker.

Frascati will need a thorough purge. It is now a tourist-place without any tourists, and a reckless stranger must pay for the absent. A stucco hotel in a ragged garden that may once have been bright. A porter carries your bag up a long hill from the station and shoos away an angry dog at the entrance. No one answers the bell for a long time. Then workmen thrust out noses from windows; a waiter appears, wrestling with a dress-coat. You tread delicately between heaps of mortar. Shutters are opened. An immense room with all sorts of purple views through many windows. A lonely dinner in a banqueting-hall with English injunctions against smoking. A big bill in the morning.

Albano is a dingy little town with gorgeous surroundings. All I remember is a big bedroom with more beds than a hen could count; the tiniest speck of electric light on a distant ceiling, so I am brought three candles and only one candlestick as though I meant to sit up all night and burn them one after the other; I must not expect my washing back until the rain stops, for it can be dried

only in sunshine; the main street is muddy and almost filled by the tram; other streets are precipitous and full of soldiers; a rickety verandah with more water-colour effects of Campagna.

I glanced at Hare's *Days Near Rome*, a more ambitious but even more irritating guide-book than Baedeker. It consists chiefly of tit-bit quotations from the masters of gush. These revel in a world of seedsmen's catalogues: thistles, bugloss, hemlock, huge reseda, hawthorn, willows, Spanish broom, poppies, umbrella-pines, myrtles, rosemary, thyme, violets, anemones, jonquil, asphodel, hyacinth, gnarled ilex, laurustinus, phillyrea, and floating ranunculus. Of course they are all there, just in that sort of kaleidoscopic confusion, but the masters of gush tie them up in bad bundles and stick them into early Victorian pots of words, thus spoiling everything. J. A. Symonds was a bad offender in this respect. Ruskin became hysterical: "deep palpitating azure, half æther and half dew"; "purple, crimson, scarlet, like the curtains of God's tabernacle"; "silver flakes of orange spray . . . breaking into stars"; "I cannot call it colour, it was conflagration." I almost felt I was growing colour-blind after skimming a few pages of this stuff in very small print. Then there was a quotation from a Miss Edwards comparing the Campagna to a Persian carpet. Why were such persons not content to spend their lives at Kidderminster?

Hare is still worse when he tries to be original. His chief originality lies in his inaccuracy; he cannot even copy inscriptions correctly. He describes some place as "literally papered with these rare foreign marbles"; and here is a gem of unconscious humour: "The sheep-dogs of the Campagna are effectually driven off by brickbats. . . . Before all, it is necessary to have a distinct aim in our excursion." There's sport for you!

The cheeriest places near Albano are Castelgandolfo, with long evergreen walks and a soothing view over the

thick-set Alban Lake; and Rocca di Papa, which looms brownly with mediæval majesty from the side of a hill, but can unfortunately be reached from Rome by tram.

Nemi has a little lake of its own, which Byron rather inaptly compared to a coiled snake. I lost my way thither, found a variety of thistles of many scents and colours on the downs, had an opportunity of wandering through woods full of spring flowers and chattering with kindly, serious peasants whose minds were far removed from war, but who had plenty to say about wolves and snakes. I could not induce them to admit the existence of the were-wolf (*lupo manaro*) which is said to be dangerous hereabouts on rainy nights; but I heard of a donkey that suddenly attacked and mauled a woman in a field the other day. I did see brooms hanging out of windows, but could not ascertain if they were intended to warn off witches, as stated in some book; I believe they were there to attract winebibbers.

Nemi has the charm of comparative remoteness. I saw clean rough rooms all opening upon the inn's gay terrace and a precipitous view; plain fare is to be had here at high prices.

Conclusion: the remoter parts of the Campagna might be very beautiful in fine weather, when it would probably be too hot for most people. Meanwhile, the best water-colour scenery does not suffice to reconcile me to water down the back, so I gleefully take my third single to Naples.

XV. NAPLES

At Rome station everybody assumes that you are travelling first class. One porter greets you with an offer to go and buy you a first-class ticket; another shoulders your small bag and asks, "First class?" without waiting for an answer; a conductor on the platform rushes up to pilot you to a first-class carriage. The fact is, only peasants and workmen travel third. But no one minds if you choose to do so too.

Elaborate side-notes in the time-table announced that certain quick trains carry third-class travellers from Rome only for stations beyond Naples. But the booking-clerk was at great pains to explain that I could use the express to Naples if I took a third-class ticket to San Giovanni, the next station beyond Naples, though the express did not stop at San Giovanni. I felt I was quibbling with the Company, and the collector on the train seemed suspicious when he asked if I were really going to San Giovanni; but perhaps that was only my guilty conscience.

All the third-class carriages had been crowded fully half an hour before the train started, and I suspect I should have had to pay the difference to second or else remain behind if I had been carrying my own bag, for there is no obligation to find room for everybody. However, the porter made himself very busy and the conductor took a good deal of trouble though he refused the coins I tried to give him. Apparently, there was not even standing room.

After a searching inquiry, however, we discovered that a coat beside a cadaverous Anarchist did belong to him, and he was told to move it. This he did, so as to leave me half an inch. Then the porter and the conductor and all

the nearest passengers remonstrated with him. He pointed to the full racks and the luggage beneath the seats, and seemed rather surprised when the coat was thrown on his knee by one of the passengers. Then some one was shoved aside to make room for my bag in the corridor, where it had no business to be, as stern regulations clearly proclaim. Third-class passengers are very kind to foreigners in Italy, as well as to one another.

I don't know when I have seen any one quite so cadaverous as my Anarchist neighbour: white as a wall, with beard and whiskers that might have been of burnt cork, a consumptive cough, a melancholy eye. It was some time before I became aware that he was addressing me.

"*Signu, signu*" (sir, sir), he gasped in pure Neapolitan. All I could understand was something about smoking, so I offered him a cigarette. Then everybody translated into Italian: he had been travelling night and day and was very ill and would I mind not smoking as it made him cough? It was a smoking carriage and everybody else was puffing away, but it is a rule of the third-class jungle to oblige.

When he wanted to alight a few stations further on, he merely pointed to his bag and some one deposited it on the platform for him; another opened the door; another took his arm. He expressed no thanks, but that is no proof of thanklessness in Italy. When I thank people, they usually look surprised; if polite, they answer "*Dovere!*" (It is my duty); I was once told quite seriously that one should give thanks only to the Madonna and say "Please" only to God.

Soon after leaving Rome, a small boy became restless and began to exhibit his withered arm to the company. He was as proud of that (a sure passport to alms in Italy) as he was of the fact that he was travelling without a ticket. He told us dramatically how he had dodged the man who clips at the barrier. Presently, the ticket col-

lector was seen looming at a distant door. The boy begged to have a bag removed, so that he might hide under the seat. He was told not to worry and that all would come right, but as no reasons were given he remained sceptical. So the bag was obligingly removed, legs were stretched out, overcoats spread, and only a very young, shrewd face peered out. All entered into the conspiracy with great zest. Railways are considered fair game in most countries, and this one belongs to the State.

Half-way down the corridor, the conductor held high argument with two women. The boy saw his opportunity in a trice, and wriggled away unperceived to the compartment where the collector had already examined tickets.

The two women were bound from Rome for places before Naples. They must therefore pay the difference either to second class or to a place beyond Naples. But neither had any money. Then they must get out at the next station and wait for a slow train. One woman said nothing. The other made a piteous appeal with all sorts of romantic details. The collector was very sorry, but it was not his affair and regulations were regulations. Tears gathered in the woman's eyes and stole slowly down her cheeks; she sobbed, she sighed, she groaned. The collector shrugged his shoulders and moved on. Then she dissolved in smiles. Public opinion was keenly on her side. The collector was an unfeeling brute and she had better remain where she was.

At the next stopping-place neither woman moved. Later on the collector returned. He had forgotten the woman who had said nothing, but he expressed surprise to find the other still there. Really, really, this was too bad. If she did not get out at the next stopping-place, there was no knowing what he might not have to do. More sighs and sobs, but she did not get out at the next or the next after that. However, as the train was slowing down again, the collector returned with another official,

who was determined to stand no nonsense. He stayed there and saw her out on to the platform, handing her bundles after her. She pretended to remonstrate, but we were all laughing and even the collector had a whimsical smile, for he knew this was her destination.

When a stranger arrives at Naples, he is immediately set upon by every variety of tout or ragamuffin. Their omniscience about foreigners amazes me every time I come. For the first two or three days they pester you unceasingly, pop up at the most unexpected places, interrupt your thoughts and conversations. Then you are quite immune; they all know you do not want them.

And all the cabmen know all about you: hail one in any part of the great sprawling city to take you home and you need not tell him where you live. Cabmen are tiresomely persistent all over South Italy. They cannot imagine that you may want to walk a yard; if you do not answer their appeals, they imagine you did not hear or understand; they follow you for long distances in hopes that you may tire or relent. In one place a well-to-do Englishman on a walking-tour made himself so agreeable that a subscription was got up, and he was presented with ten shillings to pay for a cab to his next destination.

Returning home my first evening after successfully routing touts all the afternoon, I was stopped in the Toledo by a soldier who wanted a light. This is a very common request in Italy, so I naturally agreed. Then he proceeded to converse. He had been to the front, fighting in the snow, and had been invalided home with cold feet (in the literal sense); now, while awaiting medical permission to return, he had resumed his former profession. What was that? Oh! he was a guide! And in military uniform too!

A native recently wrote that Naples owes everything to Nature and nothing to man. That is an exaggeration, but it might be described as a glorified slum, and its sea

is sometimes very blue. To my mind the Neapolitans constitute its one great charm. They are the merriest, politest, friendliest, and most mischievous people in the peninsula.

One special characteristic is that they know how to walk. I defy any one to proceed fifty yards along a Tuscan street without being bumped fifty times. But in the very narrow Toledo at Naples, whose side-walks do not admit of three people walking abreast, jostling is unknown, though the crowd is incessant and half of it is peering into the excellent shops. They avoid one another by magic, or like birds on the wing. To all such as hate crowds I commend the crowded Toledo, even on Good Friday, when vehicles are forbidden and, by an old custom, the whole population turns out to "rub Toledo" (*strusciar Toledo*) as the phrase goes. Next day the papers publish columns of the names of the well-known people who rubbed Toledo on their way to visit the Holy Sepulchres in all the churches.

The traditional idea of Neapolitans is a caricature. They are not swarthy, black-eyed people who wear red caps of liberty, sleep in the sun all day, dance round hurdy-gurdies and sing "*Funicoli-cola*" all night, shout, steal, stab, live in a state of perpetual brigandage or comic opera. I used to think Naples the noisiest city in Europe: from the Vomero hill at night I heard and applauded an incessant orchestra of life, the great rumble and rattle of exuberant vitality, like the purr of a tiger or the pleasures of Vanity Fair. That tumult, though now subdued, is by no means extinct.

But Neapolitans use a soft dialect almost in undertones; very little music is heard save the music of their speech; they dress like anybody else; many of them are fair-haired; all have the manners of Nature's ladies and gentlemen. A small example: Northern Italians rarely say "Sir" or "Thanks"; here you are addressed as "Excellency," and an ordinary acknowledgment of a

small coin or courtesy is, "May you live a hundred years."

The chief British superstition against Neapolitans is that they are specially cruel to animals, and no doubt there was great brutality in days gone by. But I am told this has now ceased, thanks in a great measure to British and cultured Italian intervention. At any rate, I can testify that I have not seen a single case of cruelty during all my wanderings in Italy, and I am more sensitive than most people in the matter.

Italian peasants regard animals as humble members of the family, and even families are sometimes ill-used in all countries. I heard of a man failing to lift a heavy weight and exclaiming in disgust, "This is woman's work." I asked a porter's wife near Naples how many children she had, and the reply was, "Four, but one of them is in Paradise." This customary phrase is applied equally to animals. During an epidemic of swine fever, a steward wrote to his master that all the pigs had "gone to Paradise." Animals are blessed in church on various solemn occasions, and Saint Anthony has been set apart as a saint of their own. There is a phrase to denote inhospitality: "I was received like a dog in church," but many people do take their pets to church in Italy and no one seems to object. As to special cruelty at Naples, we may remember that English boys have been known to throw stones at cats. And I remember a party of Frenchmen talking about caged larks: "If you want them to sing really well," said one as calmly as though he were discussing rice pudding, "you must gouge out their eyes" (*il faut leur crever les yeux*).

The obtrusive effect of the war on Naples is the absence of tourists and the closing of the chief hotels—the Grand and others were sold by auction with all their contents in March 1916. A more serious source of depression is the total stoppage of emigration, for there was a great and profitable movement through the port towards

America. Here, however, as in many parts of Italy, trade has thriven to a certain extent through the affluence of soldiers.

Southerners are supposed to be more excitable, but I have found them more philosophical about the war than North Italians. They are not less unhappy about the death or departure of their friends, but their attitude towards calamities is rather one of passive resistance, fatalism if you will. Religious folk regard the war as God's chastisement; all submit to it as a patriotic necessity.

On the whole, I find Naples little changed. Theatres, music-halls, cinematographs, and restaurants are always crowded; churches attract more worshippers; there are still German waiters in many of the coffee-houses; night is still turned into day with true Neapolitan carelessness.

On the first of April, Italian time-tables are appropriately changed.

I thoughtlessly chose that date to "run up" from Cava dei Tirreni to Naples for a dinner and a music-hall, as one might from Woking to London, a similar distance. The March time-table gave a return train at 0.35.

Feverish anxiety to reach Naples station in time. I was advised to take a tram rather than a cab for speed, but the trams were thronged. If the historians of Hell had ever taken the air in the cabs of Naples, they would not have troubled to invent Tantalus. All the real horses went to the war long ago, leaving only ex-horses, or semi-horses, or mock horses, or whatever you like to call the querulous quadrupeds. The pavement consists of loose, irregular slabs. You jolt and spin and bump without ever seeming to advance, though Jehu really does drive quite furiously with fierce cracks and fiercer objurgations. The steeds of Naples are used to both, and look round in mild surprise as Balaam's ass might have done when in a genial mood. You never seem to get anywhere, but you do get to the station in plenty of time to find there is no night train till 5.15.

What is to be done? Another long ricochet in a cab back to the zone of decent hotels? Or a night in one of the sinister-looking hostelries, which always crowd round stations? Methought "Naples by Night" would make a fine head-line on a poster, so I set forth to wander at large. But, alas for the hopes of my readers and hurrah for the domesticity of Naples!—there were no disagreeable adventures. There were fish-stalls and cake-stalls attracting the same kind of group as a potato-stall outside Waterloo Station; sleepers on wharves as on Chelsea Embankment; small coffee-houses open almost everywhere.

I entered one of these and found a quiet party. A ragged old lady was asleep at a table with her head buried in her hands. Three young men sipped beer without enthusiasm at another table. From time to time one of them would depart and a similar young man took his place. By their clothes, they might have been grocers' assistants; I was presently informed that they were police in plain clothes. Two ladies sat at the next table to mine, engaged in languid gossip. One of them informed me that she was nineteen years of age and that her husband was in prison. Lest I should not understand, she illustrated her meaning by looking through her fingers—symbolism for prison bars. Nine months for shooting somebody. This she symbolised by extending her hand and forefinger, then clicking her tongue.

Neapolitans have a faculty for "spying strangers," like the late Mr. Biggar—a sort of second smell; and there were soon many fresh arrivals of both sexes. The young grass widow whispered in my ear that they were "*tutti assassini*" (all assassins), but I fancy that was an exaggeration. Anyhow they were all very civil and ready to accept British hospitality. After a time, the shirt-sleeved waiter became anxious and brought me a bill for 2s. 3d. "All right," I said, "another round of drinks for these gentry." He looked uncomfortable, but obeyed

with some hesitation. Presently he brought another bill and said he would like to be paid. I pointed out that it was not usual to pay until the moment of departure from a coffee-house. As usual in Italy, the company constituted themselves a jury. Some took my side; others thought a large sum like 4s. 8d. ought to be settled at sight. To tease the waiter, I suggested he should be given a bill at six months (*cambiale*), the usual instrument of commerce everywhere in Italy. As a rule, Italians enjoy the smallest joke; it smooths their most ruffled feathers at once; but a large sum was now at stake and the waiter became green, the company excitable. A voice behind me suggested that I might be a German. I turned round and asked a sailor if he had said I was a German. "For charity! No! For the love of God! No!" He was profusely apologetic. But it was evidently the moment to pay and go. Oh! the sigh of relief when I pulled out a scrap of paper money! The grass widow proposed to make up a party and go for a drive. But I had my train to catch.

XVI. THE STATE LOTTERY

THE great charm as well as the danger of the Italian State lottery is that you can win a small fortune at the risk of a very humble copper coin. Five numbers, from 1 to 90, are drawn every week at each of eight of the principal towns in Italy and the government is waiting to lay you the following odds:

10½ to 1 *Estratto semplice* (against a number coming out at all).

52½ to 1 *Estratto determinato* (against a number coming out in a particular position: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, or 5th).

250 to 1 *Ambo* (2 numbers).

4250 to 1 *Terno* (3 numbers).

60,000 to 1 *Quaterno* (4 numbers).

Of course these are far from being the right mathematical odds,[1] but they are sufficiently tempting to make all sorts of people, even the very poorest, try their luck from time to time. £1 to 1d. for an *ambo* is not to be sneezed at, while £250 to 1d. for a *quaterno* is enough to make anybody's mouth water. Besides, such very uncanny things do happen in the way of luck, as any gambler can tell you.

I was once at Naples on St. Anne's Day and happened to ask the old woman at my special fruit-stall whether she ever had a flutter at the lottery. "Always," she replied, "during this very week of the year—the week of St. Anne—on the numbers 6 and 49, which are her

[1] Being no mathematician, I do not guarantee the accuracy of my calculations, but I estimate the correct odds as follows: 18 to 1 *Estratto semplice* (not 17 to 1, because a winning stake is not reimbursed), 90 to 1 *Estratto determinato*, 400½ to 1 *Ambo*, 11,748 to 1 *Terno*, and 511,038 to 1 *Quaterno*.

numbers; and what is more, I always win." The tobacconist's wife and the newspaper boy and the young woman at the cake shop and my boatman and a dozen other people all confirmed this:—6 and 49 were dead snips; it was just picking up money; practically the whole population was on, many having gone so far as to sell their beds; and the State had a really bad week once a year. I was quite sceptical, but the unanimity was strange, so I risked a lira on the *ambo*, which duly came off and I netted £10. No one except myself was in the least surprised, but all thought they had a claim to share the prize.

Dreams, of course, are a favourite way of estimating numbers. An Italian lady of my acquaintance told me her experience. She admired a ring in a shop-window at Naples, went in to ask the price and said, "No, I can't afford that, but I'll tell you what: if I win a *terno* at the lottery I will come back and buy it." The shopman did not seem very grateful and off she went to her home. There her father's clerk told her he had dreamed that, if she went to the top drawer in her bedroom and rummaged for three numbers, she would win a *terno* with them. This second mention of a *terno* in one day struck her as a coincidence worth putting to the test. So she went to the drawer and the first thing she saw was an old tram-ticket with three numbers on it. She staked on these numbers three weeks in succession and lost. On the Saturday morning of the fourth week, the clerk rushed in to say she must back the numbers again, for there is a popular notion that one must go on staking for four consecutive weeks. She told him to go away and not bother, as it was all nonsense, but he was so persistent that at last she pulled out a penny and told him to go and put it on for her. The numbers came up and she won £17 and bought her ring.

Her sister, who lives at Athens, often spends hours and hours for days making elaborate calculations with

numbers for the lottery. She covers quires of foolscap with figures, adding the number of the moon's age, deducting the epact or golden number, dividing, subtracting, multiplying, and taking away the number she first thought of. Once upon a time she came to a very certain conclusion about four numbers. She sent them to her betrothed in Italy with a money-order for a dollar and begged him to invest that sum on the *quaterno*—all of it at 60,000 to 1 with no hedging on the *terni* and *ambi*. Believing in her powers of divination, he induced his mother to add a dollar and he added two dollars himself. The four numbers came out and he won £48,000. Not content with the £24,000 which was his due, he altered one of the numbers on the ticket and told the two ladies he had lost. The proverb about cheats not prospering came true for once: within a year he had lost all his winnings on the Stock Exchange. On reflection, the young lady who had thought out those wonderful numbers came to the conclusion that she had had a lucky escape, for she presently married a man with more delicate ideas.

The other day, I wandered into a police court at Milan and heard the case of a servant who did not escape so easily as the thief of £24,000. Her mistress had given her a lira to back an *ambo*. It won and the servant collected £10, but showed an altered ticket, alleging a mistake. The mistress, however, went to the lottery-office and found the commission had been duly executed. Hence a prosecution for theft. Prisoner's counsel quoted a law to the effect that bets are the property of the person who actually makes them, quite irrespective of the provision of the money. This was held to be sound, but did not invalidate the charge, for the magistrate decided that the money for the bet had been stolen and he passed a sentence of fifteen days' imprisonment.

Young children are highly esteemed as tipsters. A friend of mine at Naples had a little girl of four. The washerwoman came in one Friday and said, " Baby, tell

me two numbers." The child replied without a moment's hesitation : " 5 and 74." The washerwoman's mother sold some of the last of her furniture, put two dollars on this *ambo*, and won £100.

Last year a waiter in a coffee-house at Turin, which I often frequent, told me he had had a peculiarly vivid dream of some numbers written on a wall—one of the surest of omens. I tried to bribe him to tell me the numbers, but he was adamant. The Saturday of the drawing, a friend of his came in and gave him the result, showing he had won. He grew very pale and said to his informant, " By Bacchus, if you are pulling my leg, I'll kill you." Then he went out and verified the numbers at his lottery-office. It was all right and he had won £8000. He came back and tackled the proprietor of the coffee-house, against whom he had the accumulated grievances of years, told him all he thought about him with more force than politeness, then took his departure. He was now a man of means and could afford to assert his independence for the first time in his life. But an hour later he learned that there had been a mistake in telegraphing one of the numbers. He had lost his job as well as his money.

A lady in Egypt related to me how she came upstairs one evening and found her father dead on the floor. After placing him on the bed and crossing his hands, she emptied his pockets and found a piece of paper with three numbers on it. She sent these with a dollar to a friend in Italy, asking her to invest it on the *terno* at Naples. None of the numbers came out there, but the whole *terno* appeared at Venice. Wise after the event, she reflected that she ought of course to have staked at Venice, for her father was born there. Had she done so, she would have won £850.

The difference between the British and Italian temperaments is illustrated by the attitude towards omens. At home, we pity backers of horses who follow dreams or

intuitions, but in Italy these are the chief guides to speculation. For the purposes of this chapter, I have bought quite a small library with such titles as *The Hidden Treasure or The True Cabala of the Lottery, The Purse of Gold, The Cascade of Gold, The Book of Dreams, The Hotel of Fortune.* One of them contains a regular dictionary with one or more numbers appended to each word. For instance, if you have tooth-ache, you must back 3 and 66; if you dream of strawberries, 80; of ants, 57; of an ambassador, 30; and so forth. But dreams and events usually require a good deal of interpretation. Your ambassador or your ant is not projected on a screen, but is smoking a cigarette, while tearing up a scrap of paper, or dissecting a dead bee on the billiard-table. Then you have to decide which are the most important words and search accordingly.

Here is a case in point. The other day, I had to leave some Italians for a few minutes and I told them I was "going to see a man about a dog." The phrase had to be explained rather laboriously, tickled their fancy, and was constantly repeated by them. That in itself would not have sufficed for an omen, but the odd coincidence occurred that, when I went out of the coffee-house, I really did see a man about a dog. I encountered a perambulating musician who was kicking a white fox-terrier in the stomach; I intervened with my walking-stick and only escaped the police station by paying compensation. Turning to the dictionary, I found Man 6, Dog 34, 59, 61, Lone Dog 3, 6, White Dogs 72, Musician 11, Song 1, 90, Beating with a stick (*Bastonata*) 67, Kicking 90, Kick 87, Police 4, Money 30, 90. From these I deduced 6 (for Man and Dog), 90 (for Song, Kicking, and Money), and 67 (for Beating with a stick). I put a lira on the *terno*, which would have brought me in £170. Then 12, 67, and 90 came out. Oh! well, that couldn't be helped: nothing had indicated 12. Yes it had, my friends told me after the event: Man and Dog had occurred twice, first inside

the coffee-house, then outside, so I ought to have multiplied 6 by 2 and won.

Events take precedence of dreams as tipsters. Neapolitans themselves have told me that, whenever there is a street accident, bystanders are far too busy deducing numbers to think about assistance—the numbers of the houses on either side of the accident, the number of the tram-car which ran over the boy, the age of the boy, besides the book-numbers for accident, carriage, boy, blood, broken arm, etc. I heard of a girl who fell in an epileptic fit in the Chiaja, upsetting a basket of apples. Instead of picking the child up or putting a bit of wood between her teeth or taking her to a doctor, the spectators proceeded to count the apples on the ground and those which remained in the basket.

Great events set the prophets very busily to work. When Pius X. died, they took his age, the years of his papacy, 10 of course, the day of the month, the numbers for Vatican, Pope, Papacy, Pius, Death, St. Peter, etc. A similar process occurred on the election of Benedict XV. Anything connected with religion always affords favourite omens, but in these two cases nobody won anything. At the time of the Messina earthquake, however, thousands of peasants were enriched for life. When Italy declared war on Austria, the consensus of opinions was for 24 (May 24th), fortified by the fact that 24 is the number for Austria; Italy 40; War 56. Most people backed these on the wheel at Rome on the ground that Rome was the place from which war was declared. But nobody won there, whereas people who distributed their stakes over all the eight wheels of the kingdom picked up an *ambo* (24 and 56) at Venice, which is perhaps the most exposed of the eight towns.

There are crowds of advertising tipsters, who make quite a fat living by offering numbers. Oddly enough, they usually describe themselves as friars, and their circulars are accompanied by rough portraits of them-

selves in monastic garb. They denounce their rivals as impostors, point out the folly of neglecting an opportunity of riches, and proclaim their mastery of the black arts, with which of course no friar must have anything to do. Here are a few typical extracts from their circulars:

"Oh! if only the idea of constancy and fidelity in my cabalistic studies had been fixed in your mind, how happy you would be to-day. Yes, I will enrich you, I do not deceive you, I speak to you as a friend and a true religious; I will scatter wealth in your house, but I want your confidence. Give me your confidence; in return I will give you comfort, riches, happiness, I will bring back the smile to your lips, restore past joys. If you neglect my holy words, comparing them to those of impostors who have always deceived you, confess yourself your own worst enemy. You widows, if you desire to return to the days when joy and happiness filled your homes, listen to my words and your dear sons will always bless my name." He wants nothing for himself, only a money order for 1s. 3d. towards his vast expenses.

Another announces "the most ingenious discovery of the new century." He does not wonder that there should be mistrust in view of the low speculators who depend upon false interpretations of dreams and popular superstitions, but "Science is no fable, cannot deceive, is like a ray of divine light that has penetrated the greatest mysteries of nature, has illuminated my mind and enabled me to discover what many have sought in vain. I venture to assume the high honour of sending Your Most Illustrious Seignory this circular to explain my infallible game on the *Ambo*." This is his proposal. You send him 5d. for expenses, receive two numbers, and back them for the minimum of a penny on each of the eight wheels for 5 consecutive weeks. This means that you risk 3s. 4d. and win 25s. if the *ambo* only comes out the fifth week. Then you send him a commission of 8s. and receive two more numbers, on which you double

your original stakes and play for five more weeks and send him 16s. commission. Every five weeks you double the stakes and increase the commission. At the end of a year, you will have won nearly £1280 and paid him about £195. A very pretty system if it works, but he does not explain how he discovers the numbers.

The books, however, are full of instructions for finding them out for yourself. The only drawback is that most of the rules are so inadequate and confused that it is impossible to follow them. Here is an example: "Take the day of the drawing, then the number of the month, counting from March, which is called the Kalend, and add them together. Thus, for Rome, 15 January, 1761, we have, counting from March to January inclusive, 11 for the Kalend, 15, day of the drawing, added to 11 (the Kalend) gives 26. 8 (sum of those two figures).

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Accordingly the numbers for that drawing will be 63, 48, 2, 84, 51." Why?

Then we have the Cabala of Zoroaster,—as he buried his table of a million figures at the bottom of the Nile, we are invited to take the current year and juggle with it; the Figure of the Pyramids; the rhymed Cabala of the Capucin with useful information appended to the ninety numbers, somewhat as follows:

1 On the month's last day
2 I make another brew
3 At least the cards, I say,
4 Announce it true;

the Cavern of Triphonius; the Sympathetic Tables of Pico della Mirandola, easy enough to work, but hopelessly wrong in all the tables where I have tested them; and the Laurels of Gold, for determining infallibly the numbers which will be drawn in all parts of the world. This is quite a labour. Take all the ninety numbers and work

upon each of them separately. Say you are working upon 79. Write this out in Italian words—settantanove—consult a table for the number of each letter, add them up and the total is 115. Divide by 12 and the remainder is 7, which is a golden number. Now comes a second test. To the total of 115 add the number of the day of the week (taken from another table), the number of the day of the month, the Kalend, and the day of the moon's age. Total 173. Divide by 12 and the remainder is 5, another golden number. If a third test also gives a golden number, the number you are inquiring about is sure to come out. The weak part of this is that certain numbers will always fail in the first test and accordingly should never come out.

I am told that there are hundreds of otherwise intelligent people who spend whole days making still more complicated calculations than these for discovering what numbers are due. When they fail, they conclude they must have miscalculated, so they start again.

It is much better fun to flutter with hieroglyphics. These are perhaps intended for players who are unable to read. All they have to do is to recognise the chief points of a dream or incident in one of the pictures and back the corresponding numbers.

There are many serious systems too, almost as many as for Monte Carlo or horse-racing, though the meanness of the odds does not make them appear very hopeful. One of my books gives one for the *estratto determinato*, but it is based on odds of $71\frac{3}{7}$ to 1 being laid, whereas these have now been reduced to $52\frac{1}{2}$. Take, for instance, the first number drawn at Bari last week. If it was an even number, back all the 45 odd numbers for 7 centesimi each to come out first at Bari. You can win 5 lire less 3.15 = 1.85. If you lose, go on with a progression of 12.60, 37.80, and 113.40. The results are given for the whole of the year 1869 at Florence, with the following result: win 515 lire, lose 431.55, net win 83.45. This is described as a

" wonderful discovery for winning always at the lottery," but would certainly not work nowadays.

Tips abound everywhere. It would seem as though everybody had joined a conspiracy to compel one to stake on the lottery. Match-boxes, packets of sweets, the songs of strolling musicians, the programmes of cinematograph shows, almost all the instruments of pleasure seek to put you into a good temper by supplying you with the deadest of snips. Some lottery-offices have two or more sets of tips for a *terno* permanently painted up over the door. They also expose lists of reserved numbers. When the time comes for ceasing the sale of the week's tickets, the manager of the office selects some numbers and fills up tickets as a speculation. These may be bought right up to the time of the draw. When one of these wins, the fact is proclaimed with great emphasis and crowds come to take advantage of the luck of that particular office.

A lottery-office is as calm and respectable-looking as any bank. There are portraits of the King and Queen on the walls, as well as tables of back numbers to invite inspirations, and such tips as " the month's *terno*," " the *terno* for all the wheels," and so forth. Some five clerks (a large proportion of them now women since the Italian War began) sit at desks behind a high counter. " How much do you want to stake? " they begin. The amount is inscribed in a big book of white or yellow tickets, on foil and counterfoil. Then you give the numbers you have chosen and finally how you want them divided up into *ambi*, *terni*, etc. Suppose you take three numbers and stake 1 lira. The clerk will then write 52c. in the space against the *terno* and 48c. in the *ambo* space. As three numbers provide three *ambi*, this means that you are staking 16c. on each *ambo*. The clerks seem to know all the possible combinations by heart, as I have found by frequent tests. " I want seven numbers on *ambi* and *terni* and *quaterni*. How many of them will there be? "

"35 *quaterni*, 35 *terni*, and 21 *ambi*," the answer comes pat.

A study of a table of combinations would be instructive to followers of the lottery. If you put 1 lira on all the *quaterni* of all the 90 numbers, you would stake £102,207 2s. 6d. and win five *quaterni* at £2400 each—net loss £90,207 2s. 6d. Suppose you had backed Nos. 46 to 90 on all the eight wheels for 31 July 1915, you would have staked £47,678 1s. 8d. on the *quaterni* and won nothing, and £4377 on the *terni* to win £1020 on the six *terni* that came up. If, on the other hand, you had chosen the numbers 1 to 45, one *quaterno* would have given you £2400, and seven *terni* £1190 with the same stakes. No wonder that the annual revenue from the lottery serves to pay for quite a decent number of armaments. Or rather I do wonder that a sufficient number of people should be foolish enough to accept such wicked odds. Still, if people must gamble, they may as well do it with the State. And, as every gambler knows, miracles do sometimes happen.

Lottery-gamblers belong to every class, chiefly of course the poorest, who will often take a few pence every week of the year from their hard-earned wage in the hope of a sudden windfall. At Naples they will pursue the same numbers for years, then perhaps abandon them and see them come out. But there are also others who throw away quite appreciable sums. In one of Matilde Serao's novels, the hero squanders a fortune on the lottery, eventually selling every stick of furniture he possesses in order to pursue numbers that never come. Men have even stolen in order to indulge in this ungenerous speculation.

To obtain an idea of the sort of persons interested, attend one of the public drawings. At Venice and Naples I have seen large miscellaneous crowds as eager about the results as Englishmen would be over racing or football. At Florence, on the other hand, the proceedings attract only a few listless boys and one or two men. A number of clerks sit at a table in the background. An official holds

up each number in turn so that the spectators may see they are all there. Each number is folded and placed in a wooden ball with brass clasps. The ninety balls are thrown one by one into a cage, which the presiding officer proceeds to turn with a handle several times so as to mix them up thoroughly. A choir-boy, dressed in a surplice, is carefully blindfolded with a white cloth and led up to the cage. He dips his arm in and extracts a ball. This is opened by the presiding officer, who reads out the number and passes it on to an official to be held up to the public, after which it is placed in a frame. A second set of the same numbers is also exhibited on a larger scale on the wall at the back. The whole ceremony takes only a few minutes.

Then the result is put up in a frame over the door of every lottery-office for interested persons to come and see. Besides the local result over the door, a printed sheet is also exhibited with the results of all the eight drawings of the week. All through the Saturday evening and on Sunday morning, streams of people come and consult their notes or little books, grumble a bit, and go away murmuring, " Better luck next week! "

XVII. BEGGARS

I WONDER if there was ever a time when Italy produced no beggars, whether the old boast about *civis romanus sum* made the world-lords ashamed of extending itching palms.

There were certainly many beggars in the spacious days of the Grand Tour. My grandfather, who perambulated the peninsula with three coaches and twelve children, seemed to remember the mendicants far more clearly than the monuments. I suppose we all have the beggars we deserve, and the early-Victorian Englishman with the starched stock and clouded cane must have seemed fair game to such as knew him only to be very mad and very rich. Moreover, his starch prevented his understanding their suppleness, and his efforts to be rid of them only made them crowd round him the more.

There are probably just as many beggars in Italy to-day, but their methods are more artistic; they have learned to fathom the mysteries of the British mind. In many ways they resemble the " sturdy beggars " of Elizabethan days. They have almost formed themselves into corporations and command as much respect as any other artists or professional men.

They have, like most crafts, a well-defined aristocracy. This is known as the *poveri vergognosi*—the poor who are ashamed. (In Naples there is a Street of the Poveri Vergognosi.) Their cue is to stand on their beats and look poor. To beg they are not ashamed, but they are ashamed to ask with their lips, or at least they know that a mute appeal is far more likely to be efficacious.

Others have no shame at all and grudge loudly if they be not satisfied. Once I gave a man five pence. He

was so much surprised that he did not thank me, but immediately asked me to make it a franc.

A beggar has fixity of tenure in his beat, and no one would dream of invading it. If he is absent on business or pleasure, he will not fail to appoint a locum tenens and exact a percentage. There is no difficulty about this, for long experience has taught him to gauge his daily takings to a bawbee. The most coveted beats are outside banks or restaurants or offices. A consul or other regular worker will not disburse every day, but is usually good for a regular sum at regular intervals.

To save trouble, a beggar will often consent to come to your house once a week to receive his dole. A friend of mine at Leghorn has fixed Tuesdays for the calls of his pensioners. There are twenty of them, each entitled to a penny-halfpenny. From my window I saw them all coming at intervals throughout the morning, ring the bell, disturb the servants, and shuffle off with an independent air like the man who broke the bank at Monte Carlo. Sometimes one of them will ask to come another day as his other Tuesday-clients live at a distant part of the town. One advantage is that you need not trouble to lay in a stock of coppers, for the beggars can always provide change.

Many beggars carry on the subsidiary business of usury, lending out francs at the rate of five per cent. per week, and they rarely press for, or indeed obtain, the return of their capital. I believe they often have considerable savings. Indeed, I heard of one who had to go to hospital and fiercely resented proposals to remove his filthy clothes. The reason for this was understood when they were found to contain quite a big bundle of notes tucked away in the linings.

It is deemed wiser for a beggar to have or assume some infirmity or misfortune, but these are not essential. The average Italian is full of pity for beggars, just as he is for madmen and drunkards. It is enough for him to hear that

somebody is in want and he feels it his duty to afford relief. It is regrettable, however, that his common sense and devotion to children do not lead him to discourage men who hawk half-naked babes about in all weathers to emphasise their needs. Several women have admitted to me quite candidly that they hired children for a few pence a day.

Italian beggars are, however, difficult to discourage. At Rapallo, for instance, I found the whole place placarded with solemn proclamations against mendicancy. These were intended to placate the many strangers who visit that lovely spot during the bathing and winter seasons. But I was accosted by more beggars during my first half hour at Rapallo than I had been during three months in Liguria.

The fact is, there will always be beggars in Italy until that very distant day when Italians change their tender hearts.

XVIII. THE CHILDREN'S PARADISE

WHATEVER may happen in other countries, no amount of wars need alarm Italy about the perpetuation of her race. Children swarm everywhere: an amazing contrast when you cross the border from childless France. And nowhere else have I seen them held in such high esteem.

Whatever an Italian man or woman may be doing, whether discussing high politics or low dresses, finance or frills, the sight of a small toddler instantly breaks off all business. Whether it resembles a cherub or an imp of mischief, is lovely or hideous, merry or morose, there are instant cries of *carino* (the darling!), there is an instant rush upon it with open arms to praise and cuddle and caress. Anybody escorted by a child in train, steamer, or other public place is the instant cynosure of all eyes, the victim of endless cross-examination. Even the suspicion of possessing children affords a like provocation. When parents discover themselves on a journey, their nursery talk never ceases; they produce photographs from pouches, they bate their breath, their eyes grow dim.

More than half the correspondence to and from the Italian front is devoted to chronicles of the very young. *La mam-ma* describes every lisp and laugh and naughtiness at home, and *babbo* (papa) retorts with anecdotes of the small people he has played with in towns he has stormed. Instead of wanting to cut off their little hands or spit them with a bayonet, he takes them on his knees and finds them sweets or pennies and kisses them and talks to them of his own bairns away in the land of sun and song.

Of course, all Italian children are hopelessly spoiled, especially by their fathers, who think that anything they specially like themselves must give pleasure to their offspring. My cook's brother-in-law is very proud of having given his first-born a toothful of wine when it was only

four minutes old. A reservist of my acquaintance became unpopular with his wife because he gave a tumblerful (and incidentally a colic) to his two-year-old on its name-day.

But Italian children are amazingly hardy; otherwise not one of them would ever grow up. They are fed with all sorts of indigestible things, from lobsters and *stoccafisso* (a coarse kind of kipper) to mud and pebbles and string, which they gather for themselves, being allowed to run wild—or, rather, toddle wild—almost as soon as they can use their legs.

No sort of authority is ever exercised over them.

You may hear a parent cry "Come here!" or "Don't do that!" or "For goodness' sake, keep quiet!" but the young rebels never take the faintest notice. They are never smacked, and they know perfectly well that they have only to cry in order to obtain anything they want immediately.

They are very precocious, like other wild animals, and cultivate Machiavellian gifts of mischief at an early age. Beware of them when they remain quiet for an instant. Two very wild boys came to visit a certain Consul the other day. They had been looking forward to this visit for a long time, and had been reduced to a comparative goodness for days by their mother's threats not to take them. When they arrived they were horribly disappointed. "Why," they exclaimed, in disgust, "this isn't a monkey!" The only Consul they had ever heard of was a performing ape. However, they soon had their revenge. They sat like saints and fondled the fox-terrier. This goodness soon aroused suspicions, and then they were found to be trying to gouge out the poor creature's eyes.

They fight just like English boys, they love every game they can get hold of, they are courteous to a stranger—unless they suspect him to be an Austrian, when they will pelt him with stones.

Italian children grow up only too quickly, and they grow up to be very fine people indeed.

XIX. THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF NAPLES

ANOTHER popular delusion is that Southern Italy is always hot and blue. I am sure it is colder than the Riviera, which can be cold enough. Even at Elba I could pass a winter without underclothes, almost without blankets. Round about Naples I shivered amid constant rains all through April. And this part of the world, having really no architecture, depends entirely for its beauty upon the colours of God. It is a sallow maiden or a bedraggled rose.

House-hunting is a thorough way of realising a neighbourhood. The suburbs of Posilipo and Pozzuoli have some quaint villas clinging to the rocks towards the sea, and I found a palace-pension where I could have had my own terrace, but war had closed the restaurant and I should have had to have my meals transmitted in baskets by wire from above; moreover, Naples without sunshine is like Saint Paul without charity.

The idea of living at Pompeii appealed to me until I returned there. How very old-world, almost prehistoric! Yes, but what a wilderness! The only thing would be to dig in one's garden, hoping for treasure-trove. The excavations have suffered through the war. There used to be some 160 excavators, most of whom seem to have gone to excavate trenches at the front; but there have recently been some important discoveries, which are shown by special favour to the elect.

Though there are no longer tourists at Naples, the plague of Pompeian guides has in no way abated. At Naples Circumvesuvian station, a bevy beset me; over the booking office and in the train were notices warning travellers against unauthorised guides; at every station two or three vultures appeared at the windows, on the

footboard, in the carriage itself, offering to take me round for a song; and guides at Pompeii are even more useless than elsewhere.

The entrance to the excavations costs 2s. a head—if it were a pound, the gullish herd would doubtless pay it, for Pompeii is considered one of the essential sights of Italy, though there is nothing which cannot be studied equally well on a picture post-card. I had been there eighteen years ago, so I saved my 2s. for beer. The revenue of this dreary cemetery is so great that it pays not only for the extensive excavations, but for the maintenance of many national monuments in other parts of Italy. The thoroughness and zeal of Italian archæologists cannot be too highly praised; they make the most of their historical treasures without obtruding them.

The extreme tentacle of Neapolitan tourism is Pæstum, which takes the better part of a day to visit. In a fever-stricken plain, amid a desolation of scrub and scorpions, are some of the finest specimens of Greek architecture surviving in the world, a Temple of Neptune like the Maison Carrée at Nîmes, and some other buildings with crumbling columns. A happy inspiration enabled me to realise that I could see all I wanted from the train, so instead of being stranded for hours among the scorpions, I stayed where I was and went on to Agropoli, which is quite as Greek as Pæstum and offers unexplored archæology on a rock by the sea. There are no creature comforts, but the scenery and battlements and buildings and the carvings on the quaint old houses are refreshing.

In the pot-house where I ate macaroni and stringy chicken, the talk was all of those who had gone or were going to the war, what classes were being called up, the strictness of the medical examination. As usual, I was struck by the candour of those who would rather be excused. A consumptive-looking youth of twenty was the object of envy because he had been refused for the thinness of his chest.

Another young man explained to me that, in peace time, the odd numbers of a family—eldest, third, fifth sons, etc.—do military service, while the evens are exempt. He was the second son, but had now been called. I asked whether, if an eldest son were a shirker and the second had martial cravings, an exchange could be effected.

"No," was the sad reply, "substitution is utterly forbidden. By Bacchus, if it were not so, how gladly would I pay for a substitute!"

Italians are not greater shirkers than any one else, but they have not a vestige of false shame in the matter.

Salerno is the capital of a province, commands a broad gulf, and is just outside the tourist track. The chief hotel consists of a fifth floor and no restaurant. My windows overlooked the sea-front, a stretch of mud where frantic efforts are made to convey blocks of stone in overladen carts. There are usually three horses to a cart, one in the middle between the shafts, who does most of the work, and the other two attached to ropes at the sides: they come in for all the flogging and make fitful starts in hopeless directions; one cart remained stationary for nearly an hour in spite of the wildest excitement on the part of the driver and all his friends.

There are fair shops in a broad back street, but practically the whole of the front consists of coffee-houses and wretched restaurants, haunted by young officers and music-hall singers. Salerno is evidently a keen patron of the drama. Besides a big, handsome theatre, too big to be worth opening nowadays, there are many music-halls and I found performances in full swing all through Lent. The rather unusual hour of opening was 10 p.m., which meant that one wouldn't go home till morning. There were no patriotic songs or war allusions or typical Neapolitan minstrelsy. Young woman succeeded young woman, like Amuraths, on the stage, all exactly alike, with the same thin, friendly, chatterbox voices, the same

slim, graceful figures and insipid faces, almost the same clothes and the same profusion of gold chain bangles. They all received the same generous applause from an overcrowded house.

A really remarkable turn was provided by a company of marionettes, which executed ballets, pantomimes, melodramas, and all imaginable stage-work with extraordinary grace and skill. As their wires were almost invisible, very little imagination was needed to endow them with life: indeed, they were much more alive than the average actor or actress. In the afternoons, there was usually an excellent Punch and Judy show on the front, much the same combative drama as at home, but with an infinitely more varied repertory.

Salerno and its neighbourhood were thoroughly exhausted in a week. Then chance took me to Cava dei Tirreni, a few miles inland, on the way back to Naples. Chance and the attractive name. (I have stayed for a similar reason at Dombovár, India (Hungary), Minnabella (Ethiopia), Angri, etc.) It lies in a hollow amid mild mountain scenery and umbrella pines. In peace-time it was a favourite summer resort, but now the chief hotels have been turned into military hospitals. I lunched at an inn in the principal street and was so much impressed by the goodness and cheapness of the fare that I migrated thither at once and remained many weeks. The meat is the best I have found in Italy: really tender beef and veal; mutton we never have, and what passes on the menu for lamb is really young goat, as a certain pungent flavour soon reveals. Fresh fish and the newest vegetables and the sweetest fruits and a good rough wine are all thrown in; best of all, *ricotta*, almost identical in flavour and appearance with the divine cream of Cornwall (and Devonshire) or the *kaimak* of Turkey and Serbia. A full meal, *à la carte*, rarely exceeds 1s. 6d., or you can have bed and board for about 4s. 6d. a day.

Attendance is primitive, for war has driven women to

men's work and servants are scarce, but there is such an atmosphere of good nature that you do not feel really angry when the bell is left unanswered for hours and your room is left unswept for days. My only litigation has been over an old woman's irrevocable decision to expose all the hotel washing on my balcony.

"Where else am I to put it, Excellency?" she would plead with a wheedle.

Threats to go away were of no avail. She would promise never to do it again, but a few hours later she would reappear quite calmly with her arms full of wet sheets to obscure my view. I won my battle only after I had tumbled all the laundry into the garden several times.

Graziella, the dwarf maid-of-all-work, bursts in upon me with a broad grin at the most embarrassing moments, tells me all the gossip of the locality, flatters me outrageously, and borrows all my worldly goods without asking whenever she thinks they are needed elsewhere; at the same time she is always ready to borrow on my behalf if she thinks I am in need. This morning, a really nice cake of soap made its appearance on my wash-hand stand.

"What is this?"

"Oh! I thought you would soon be wanting a new cake, so I borrowed it from the singer downstairs. I am sure she will never miss it."

Again, it was Graziella who decided that the newspaper woman should not be paid for a long time because she is "too proud" (*troppo superba*). "I tell her that, if she does not mend her manners, she shall not be paid at all."

Whenever I ask Graziella for anything, she exclaims "*Adesso—subito*" (Now—at once), departs and straightway forgets all about it.

The restaurant is chiefly visited by officers of the medical service attached to the hospitals here. A little English lady recently appeared in the costume of the Salvation Army, but all I could extract about her from

Graziella was that she sang and danced in the music-halls!

There is no chance of being bored at meals, owing to the variety of intruders. First comes an imbecile cripple, who stands at your table displaying unpleasant deformities and emitting unpleasant groans until he has received satisfaction.

Then come two nuns gliding about with a money-box, which the elder seems almost ashamed to offer.

Then a man with a stringed instrument, like the Hungarian *cimbalom*, which he sits down to play in a corner.

Then a jovial, dusty friar with a saucer for money and a great sack on his back for broken victuals: he nearly had a fit one day when I gave him all the oranges and Japanese medlars on the table, but he was prudent enough to depart at once with his spoil.

Then a newsvendor.

Then the hurdy-gurdy man who has been making a frightful din outside: he usually presents you with printed copies of the songs he has been grinding.

Then two villainous mandolinists and a sallow young woman with a black eye and a voice like John Peel's view-halloa.

There is no end to the procession, and I have never seen any one refuse money to anybody, either here or anywhere else in Italy.

It is quite a common sight to behold a grave and reverend signor stop in the crowded Toledo, undo his fob, fumble for a leather purse, and take all sorts of superfluous trouble in order to hand a halfpenny to a passing beggar.

My chief acquaintances at Cava are the municipal librarian, a Salerno grocer who once went to play the flute at Glasgow, and various young bloods who like to show that they can speak English "discreetly" (*discretamente*), which means with more valour than

accuracy. I find an odd mixture of intelligence and simplicity.

"Ah!" said the librarian, "so you are writing a book about Italy at war! In what language? I suppose you will have it printed in Cava."

The fact is, most Italian authors, except the very few of international reputation, do not write for filthy lucre, but are content to produce a few presentation copies for their friends.

I must also mention my acquaintance with the *delegato* (chief constable) if only to illustrate the absence of fuss in Italy.

When war broke out, all foreigners had to take out a permit of sojourn, and, by the letter of the law, they are supposed to renew it every time they stay in a fresh place more than three days. But I troubled to renew mine only at Leghorn and Elba, some official having given me a hint that I need not add to the labours of local authorities.

However, after six weeks at Cava the *delegato* sent a message asking me to call at his office, and, when I took no notice, he told my landlord that, if I did not come, the *guardie* (policemen) would be sent to fetch me. I asked the landlord what would be a good time for me to call, and he said, "Before nine in the morning." When I demurred, he explained, "Well, you see the *delegato's* office hours are from nine to two, but as there is very little work to do here, he prefers to look in before nine and see whether there is any reason why he should not remain away for the rest of the day."

A special appointment was made for me at the *delegato's* house at 5 p.m. When I arrived, he put his head out of the window to identify me; he opened the door for me himself and gave me an odd bow and scrape, which I had never seen before, but which I understand is a usual mark of respect in this part of the world. The scrape consisted in a circular movement with his right foot as

though to remove some obstacle from the mat. Then he took me into his study and read me a genial lecture about my misdeeds. Of course he had known of my arrival from the first, and, as weeks went by, he had wondered more and more why I did not call upon him, for the law was very explicit about a new permit within three days of arrival. I had really exposed myself to a *contravenzione*. However, it was not his character to make trouble, least of all for an ally. So I was given a new permit and we parted great friends, with more bows and scrapes on the mat.

Cava is a splendid centre for mountain and woodland excursions. The most attractive place in the immediate neighbourhood is perhaps Corpo di Cava (forty-five minutes' climb), a village on a rock commanding a great green panorama; it has two pleasant inns, one of them an old convent, both choked in roses.

Close by is the famous Abbey of the Trinity, one of the few which have not been disturbed by modern times and modern secular laws. It is situated in a little valley that seems at the world's end, like a Serbian monastery; it was founded in 1011, but does not look a bit old, save for its crypt and underground columns; it has 60,000 dull, well-classified parchments, papal bulls, and other materials for historians of the dull ages; there is a striking stack of mediæval skulls and bones. What interested me most was the chapter-room, in the centre of which is a slab where the monks stand in turn to make public confession of their sins.

On the way back I was shown a house that a priest wanted to let. It was not much of a house and had scarcely any furniture, but there was a luxuriant garden with arbours and fountains. I asked the price. After hesitating for a very long time, the priest replied £12 a month for a minimum of three months. I learned presently that he had received only £2 a month during the season in peace-time. Englishmen are all supposed to be millionaires.

I tried walking along the high road towards Naples, but the exercise is too dreary in this part of the world, where no one walks save the most wretched tramps. The dust was over an inch deep and I scarcely met any one. There was, however, one cheerful little incident. A travelling tinker drove a donkey cart full of pots and pans. Something was shouted at him from a field. He leaped out of his cart, uttering fearful imprecations, rushed to a heap of stones by the roadside and began to bombard. He was vividly dramatic in all his slightest movements. Two men issued from the field, one of them with a steel hook in his hand, and I leaned against a telegraph post in expectation of fun. But the second man proved to be a peacemaker and further warfare was restricted to words.

No one seems to suffer in pocket hereabouts from the war, except the cabmen. They form almost a race apart in Southern Italy. As mine host of the Caffè dei Tirreni tells me, scarcely any of them know how to drive. During the season before the war, it was by no means unusual for a Cava cabman to make £2 a day, and he does not spend more than 1s. 6d. a day on his horse's food. Now, in war-time, there are dozens of these drones outside the station, hotel, and post-office, or crawling about the streets, but they rarely catch more than a fourpenny fare from a soldier. Their importunity is exasperating, and one cannot cross the road without being pursued with cracking whips and fantastic pronunciations of the English word carriage.

Suddenly some English friends and their friends invaded Cava. After lunch, a clergyman and a major bade me jump into their cab and drive with them to Ravello. Respect for their cloths and their country admitted of no refusal; I had long wanted to visit Ravello; and the cabman agreed to a discreet bargain for my return the same evening. Oh, his nose! Never have I seen so rich a red even in an English music-hall.

There was a pretext for stopping at every wayside tavern; the nose grew redder and redder as we proceeded, like some glowing danger signal, more and more vulturine too, as his eyes faded away into his head. I once saw a similar phenomenon in an opium-eater at Marseilles. The clergyman grew interested in the prospects of my return drive and advised me to maroon the driver in some pot-house and take the reins myself. However, the shades of night were falling very fast as we zigzagged up the steep ascent to Ravello, and neither driver nor grass-fed horses were in a condition to undertake another journey. For this I was soon consoled by the joys of the glorious village.

Ravello is on a ridge overlooking miles of wooded hills and valleys to the brilliant sea. The two hotels are on modern lines, actually possess baths, and offer civilised, almost sumptuous fare for some 5s. 6d. a day; the white local wine is excellent, like a dry Sauterne, but costs 2s. a bottle, a big price hereabouts.

There is an eleventh-century cathedral with a sloping floor that has an odd effect. Nearly all the columns and carvings have been covered over with plaster by some mediæval Puritan, but the ambo still reveals delightfully quaint mosaics of Jonah being swallowed and ejected by a whale not much bigger than himself: the puzzle being how he contrived to turn round inside.

But Ravello's chief attractions are her gardens. Roses, roses everywhere—roses of every size and kind, including even the dear old moss-rose, which seemed to have been banished from Europe. The perfumes that waken you at dawn might be whiffs from the Prophet's paradise.

The gardens and carvings of the old Bishop's palace have made it a show place and you must buy tickets of admission. It belonged to an English lady who left it to a nephew named Lacaita, perhaps a relation of Gladstone's secretary. The gardener told me that before the war he sold 2000 tickets in a year at 10d. each; now only a few stragglers come.

On the way back to Cava, I had to be very firm with the ruddy driver, not only in the matter of tavern halts, but also because he tried very hard to turn my cab into an omnibus for every prosperous person who wanted to travel our way. At the finish, when I overpaid him, he did not thank me but begged gloomily for more.

When we left Cava, the British major had whisked his purse into the road and it was now my duty to seek for it. Some suggested the town-crier, others the circulation of handbills offering a reward for the purse with permission to keep the contents. I asked whether it might not have been taken to the police station. The whole coffee-house stared, eyes twinkled, mouths gaped, shoulders shook. "Of course it *might* have fallen into honest hands," the librarian observed with a choking voice. Then the storm of laughter broke, and I thought it would never cease. Oh! these Englishmen! What humour! What fancy! What refreshing ideas! Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

Midnight of the 3rd of June 1916 was reckoned as 1 a.m., but this has had no effect whatever on the large agricultural population of Italy.

Many of us may have forgotten the "time of Saint Benedict" or *tempo all' italiana*, which was instituted by that Saint and remained in vigour until the 1st of November 1893. By that system, a bell rang for noon when the sun crossed the meridian of each locality, and another bell rang half an hour after sunset for the *Ave Maria*, or twenty-four o'clock, or termination of the day, and the next hour was reckoned as one o'clock of the morrow.

That system is still observed in families: for instance, if you have a birthday or name-day to-morrow, flowers and congratulations will begin to reach you half an hour after this evening's sunset. More important still, it has been found that the beasts of the field are no respecters of mean time, Roman time, Greenwich time, Central European time, or any other forms of scientific opportunism.

Even after the decree of the 1st of November 1893, field labour continued to be regulated by solar time and it is still being thus regulated in spite of the interference of our modern Joshuas.

Take my own case. I am in the habit of waking when the flies call me with insistent buzzes in my ears, and of rising when Graziella brings the early coffee, which she does as soon as the cow arrives on its rounds. But neither the flies nor the cow have been hoodwinked by the *decreto luogotenenziale* of Thomas of Savoy, I wake and rise as of yore, and habit requiring the same period to prepare my appetites, I lunch at a nominal 1 p.m. and dine at a nominal 9 p.m., which are the same as the old 12 and 8.

Similarly, when the match-tax was raised, I continued to buy the same box for a penny, but it contained fewer matches, part of the space being filled with a slab of cardboard. Again, the Toledo at Naples was rechristened Rome Street (*via Roma*) ages ago, but everybody still calls it Toledo.

Horam non animam mutant.

XX. FISHERS OF THE AIR

It is not often that one comes across a little place with a really exciting and ingenious sport of its own. At Cava dei Tirreni, however, there has existed a peculiar form of pigeon-catching for many centuries. It was introduced by the Longobards in 892 and developed by the Normans when they came to Salerno and has flourished ever since.

The whole neighbourhood of Cava is dotted about with odd-looking round towers, which I imagined at first were relics of some prehistoric worship. They are tall and slim and windowless and weather-beaten; they seem to be dotted about quite purposelessly among the umbrella-pines on the beautiful hills. I thought they might have been erected to signal the approach of pirates; but the positions did not command a specially good view of the sea.

I asked the first man I met and he was greatly surprised that everybody did not know about the famous pigeon towers of Cava. At the beginning of every autumn great flocks of pigeons migrate from Siberia to Africa and pass over Cava and the Gulf of Salerno. No doubt they have other routes, and I hear that attempts have been made to intercept them at Leghorn and in Spain. But Cava is the only place where they are systematically waylaid with towers and nets and slings. The season begins just before Michaelmas and lasts till Saint Martin's day, the 11th of November; it is at its height from the 15th to the 25th of October.

There are steps about half-way up the inside of the towers. Then you must climb up a rickety ladder and scan the horizon from the parapet at the top.

The watchers on the towers have assembled before dawn for the meet, which they call the *Buongiorno* (good-day). They belong mostly to the lower middle class—for

instance, the leading spirits include the coffee-house keeper's son and the photographer's brothers. They have clubbed together to form six societies or "games." A "game" usually consists of three or four towers and a clearing where the nets are set up. The owner of this "game" has probably inherited it from his ancestors during generations or centuries and has the exclusive right of slinging pigeons. When a property is sold, the "game" does not necessarily pass with it, but may be either retained or sold separately. Of the three or four towers in a "game," one is probably about a thousand yards away from the net, the nearest perhaps seventy yards, but the distances vary in each "game." Besides the towers of the six "games" there are many others near Cava, about which even octogenarians cannot tell you when they were last used.

Each society has a neat little chalet for a club-house, usually near the chief tower. Inside, are the horns, trumpets, and other accoutrements, various trophies and log-books, as well as singlesticks, bagatelles and other diversions for interludes of the sport, besides a kitchen for the preparation of light meals.

It is in merry mood that the members take their places in the fresh morning air. Most of them are clad in elaborate hunting-kit, with velveteen coats and top-boots and peaked caps. Two men usually ascend each tower and the rest are distributed among the nets.

From the first tower issues a long, lowing cry: *Bu-o-o-n-gi-o-o-or-r-no!* which reverberates among the hills and valleys. It is taken up at the next tower and the next and by the men at the nets and the watchers among the trees until it reaches the *vedetta*, where the ceremony is concluded by a merry tune on a horn. As each of the six societies has its *Buongiorno*, the gaiety and liveliness of the proceedings are something to remember.

The *vedetta* or look-out place is a straw hut some two or three miles away from the nets, in the direction from

which the pigeons are expected, that is to say towards Naples. Sometimes it is on a hill, sometimes down in the valley. That of the Serra Society, for instance, is close to Cava station, and when a flock of birds is sighted at the moment of the arrival of a train, those passengers who know nothing of the ancient game imagine the whole population has suddenly gone mad, what with the piercing cries, the blowing of horns and the general atmosphere of wild excitement.

As soon as this signal has been sounded, it is taken up by the various paid watchers, who are scattered about in the woods and on the hills. It is their business to announce the direction and height of the birds' flight. This they do by means of conventional sounds on their trumpets and horns or by the exercise of their strong lungs.

The birds appear like specks on the horizon, travelling at a prodigious pace, always with a leader, whom they follow and obey implicitly. They may be of any number, from a single pigeon to as many as a hundred. But an usual flock contains twenty to thirty or thirty-five. An untrained eye finds it very difficult to guess the size of a flock, which it usually exaggerates, but old hands can tell the number within four or five at a fairly close range.

The men on the towers are provided with slings and whitewashed stones about the size of small hens' eggs—pebbles that have been carefully selected on the beach. A sling consists of two double strings some 4 feet long with a soft leather slit pouch in the middle, just big enough to hold one of the stones. On the arrival of a flock, a stone is flung with great force, sometimes to an enormous distance, quite regardless of the safety of people walking about in the valley: no one troubles even to shout "Fore!" I was laughed to scorn when I asked whether there were not many casualties. "Oh! no," was the reply, "people know when the sport is on and they keep out of the way." It struck me as about as safe as standing on a mountain

and throwing stones on to a high road on the off-chance of there being no passengers.

One of the theories expounded to me was that the pigeons mistake the stone for a pioneer of their own race and follow it into the net. Another version was that they pursued it, fancying it to be food. But both these notions are quite wrong, according to a man who has been at the game from childhood. He says the pigeons imagine the stone to be a hawk, their most redoubtable enemy; far from following it into the net, they at once make frantic efforts to avoid it; so you must send the stone precisely where you do not want them to go. It is strange that birds capable of organising long-distance aviation from Siberia to Africa should be so stupid about such a simple matter as stone-throwing. Moreover, a hawk is not bright white.

Here is a typical scene. The birds are flying rather high towards the sea, a good deal to the left of where the net is spread for them. You whirl your first stone to the left of them, and their first instinct is to sink at once to the ground, somewhat as I have seen locusts settle in Abyssinia. But that would not do at all. You must keep them moving all the time and keep them moving towards your net, which is from 70 to 200 yards from your tower. Great accuracy is required to do this successfully: it is by no means a sport for amateurs: you might as well set a stable-boy to drive a restless tandem. If the stone travels a yard or two too far to the right or to the left, the net may be missed altogether and you may have to wait hours for another flock. You see, the birds travel at a tremendous speed and, though they do not suspect the net, they are as cunning as monkeys when they think it is a question of giving a hawk a wide berth. When you cannot drive them into your own net, you try to direct them towards the tower of one of your friends.

When they are flying very high, as is often the case, you must sling your stone towards them and they will

come down even if it does not nearly reach them. Now they may perhaps imagine the stone to be another bird or one of their leaders. In any case, down they come at a prodigious pace, almost as though they were falling; many of them almost stunning themselves against trees or ground. Then they are hurried on by loud cries from the watchers or others in the neighbourhood and by more stones from the towers.

This sport provides all sorts of thrills and vicissitudes. And the pigeon-catching " shop " is as prolific of boasting and romance and chaff and emulation as fishing or golf. Even Colonel Bogey is not so garrulous after dinner as Signor Cacciatore dei Colombi as he takes his lunch on his tower in the intervals of the chase. An amazingly big flock was within an ace of avoiding the net when an incredibly long shot sent the stone to precisely the right point at the last moment and every one of them was caught. . . . You can imagine the sort of thing.

The slinging of stones is the essence of the sport, the high art which provides chief pride and admiration. It requires well-developed muscles as well as a quick eye and a steady aim. But the netting is also far from child's play.

In each of the clearings between the thickets is a little house with a mast. In some " games " it is merely a straw hut, but the Serra Society has a round building like a stunted Martello tower. Out towards the valley whence the birds will come, it has a number of loopholes, which seem almost to suggest that reprisals are feared on the part of the birds.

From the centre of each little house rises a tall black mast. Here two huge nets are affixed, stretching right and left to the trees of the two clumps and spreading out obliquely to the ground at the back. Inside are a handle and cogwheels for raising the nets and weights. These weights (one for each net) are stone cylinders of some 40 lbs. provided with rings. They are affixed to the top of

the nets at the mast and connected by a rope over a pulley with an iron bar at the opening of the building.

When the pigeons are expected, we must all go into hiding, for the birds are long-sighted and suspicious; they will avoid the net altogether if any one is about. So the little building is packed with people, all peering and listening through the various apertures. The distant horns are heard, the approaching flocks are discerned on the sky-line. Then come shouts from the slinger and his companion on each tower in turn. It is a breathless moment.

The man at the rope is white and nervous; his eyes start out of his head; there is a tremor in every fibre. For all now depends on him. If he releases the weight at precisely the right moment, the net comes down instantly and the birds are bagged. But a moment too late and he leaves a clear space, through which they fly in safety towards the sea and Afric's golden sands. A moment too soon and they realise the obstruction, swoop backwards and upwards and are free. It is all a matter of an instant, the twinkling of an eye, *un attimo* (a breath) as the sportsmen never tire of repeating. Indeed, all confess that many more flocks escape than are taken; the odds are heavy on the birds.

The favourite times for them to arrive are from dawn to 9 or 9.30 a.m. and again before sunset, but they may come at any hour of the day, or they may not come at all for several days in succession. All sorts of things affect them, such as wind and atmospheric conditions; indeed, the ancients were probably not so foolish as we think in making auguries from the flight of birds: at any rate, at Cava they enable shrewd observers to augur what the weather is going to be.

No one who has not witnessed this supreme sport can have an idea of the excitement. At the same time, it is a gentle art, for the birds are all taken alive. I have seen most sports, hot and cold, from the blood of bulls on

Easter Day at Madrid and the fierce, patient cock-fights with natural spurs at Barcelona to the splendid thrills of *pelota* among Basque champions, but I think the great moment when the nets whirl themselves down at Cava affords a finer quintessence of emotion.

The birds are grey and rather smaller than the domestic pigeon. They cannot be trained or tamed. A member told me that he kept one for nine months, but it remained in a comatose condition and could scarcely be persuaded to feed. Among the flocks you may find trained carrier-pigeons with medals or correspondence attached to them. These have probably met a flock on their travels and been persuaded to join it by glowing descriptions of the delights of Afric's sunny fountains rolling down their golden sand. They must not be roast or boiled, but packed off in baskets to their lawful owners.

The sport is far from being a profitable one, for, even with luck, the captured pigeons never pay for all the preparations. There are the towers to rent and maintain—one of them was badly struck by lightning the other day—a staff of experts must be paid to watch for the birds and signal their arrival and direction with calls and trumpets; then there are the nets and the little club-houses. Each society consists of about thirty members who subscribe 30 lire (£1) a year each.

The townlet of Cava had considerable historical importance owing to the famous Abbey of the Trinity, which exercised wide powers of government over the whole neighbourhood. There are accordingly ample records and archives, where I have found many references to the local sport. As a quaint instance I may mention that, in the sixteenth century, the University, having emancipated itself from the Abbey, resolved after solemn deliberation "to purchase the place called Dead Cats (*Gatti Morti*) for the pigeon-game."

And in a book of poems, published at Naples in 1671, I have found a sonnet by a certain Tommaso Gaudiosi,

that shows the methods have not changed since his day:

Move colà, dai più gelati lidi,
Innocente d'augel schiera volante,
Che fendendo le nubi, a Borea avante,
Cerca altra terra, a rinnovar suoi nidi.

Ecco, la scopre a i cacciatori infidi,
Sul primiero apparir, corno sonante ;
Ecco, fra i colli e le frondose piante,
La caccian trombe e strepitosi gridi.

Ella, seguendo le fallaci scorte
De' tinti sassi, incautamente piomba
Ne' tesi lacci, a terminar sua sorte ;

Così la semplicissima colomba
Senza passar pei cardini di morte,
Perde il Ciel, ferma il volo, entra a la tomba.

Here is a prose translation:

" Lo, there it moves, it starts from the most frozen shores, this innocent flock of quickly flying birds, cleaving the clouds in front of Boreas, seeking another land to renew their nests.

" Lo, at the first appearance, the flock is espied by the lurking hunters, who proclaim it with sounding horns; lo, amid the hills and leafy plants it is pursued with trumpets and boisterous cries.

" Following the deceptive escort of whitened stones, the flock incautiously plunges into the spread nets and meets its fate.

" And so the very simple dove, without passing through the agony of death, loses the high Heaven, ceases her flight and finds her tomb."

XXI. PUBLIC-HOUSES

TEMPERANCE reformers have often talked of reforming the public-house. They thought it a very clever idea to take an existing institution, in their eyes thoroughly bad, and turn it into something they would describe as snug, cosy, perhaps even homelike. There would be shining urns, bagatelles instead of billiards, thick sandwiches instead of sanded floors. Their ideal was a perpetual school-treat (with no treating), smugness masquerading as snugness, a chronic night-school where the parson would condescend to go and smoke his pipe with "the men" on Thursday nights after dinner. It never occurred that, if "the men" had wanted such places, they would have had them long ago.

Now at first sight Italian public-houses are the British temperance reformers' ideal. There is little or no drunkenness, dullness reigns, yet at the same time there is no arbitrary interference with the liberty of the subject. Milan, for instance, has 6218 licensed premises, one for every 96 inhabitants. They are little shops, clean and bright, with a chair or two and a zinc bar and rows of gleaming bottles, but nine customers out of ten patronise the coffee-urns. These urns are fed by gas and often emit the most pestilential smells, which no one minds. People come to gossip, but they do that in other shops. If I were ever ill, I should hate to go to the chemist and describe my symptoms, for I should have an audience of at least a dozen; they would all be most willing to advise, but they might be long in consultation.

The further south you go—the more into wineland, that is—the less do people drink, perhaps on the analogy of finding a greedy child a job in a confectioner's shop.

The chief public-house in Cava dei Tirreni may be

described as a type. It is at the corner of the public square facing the fountain.

There is a big altar-counter of lacquered wood with a reredos of bottles and syphons. In front of this is a sort of confessional box where an elderly man sits in velveteens. There is a chair on the floor below him, where a guest is usually in the attitude of consultation, the sort of deferential consultation one gives Mr. Speaker on a point of order.

Two or three young men, evidently the sons of Velveteens, hover about behind the bar and push biscuit tins into alignment from time to time—if they were chess-players, you could fancy them muttering the Italian equivalent of "*j'adoube*"—or they stroll off into the next room to see if somebody is really playing billiards.

There is a fat, solemn, lame waiter in shiny blue serge also hovering or perpending. After cannoning with the young men and disarranging their biscuit tins, he usually retires with half a black cigar and a newspaper to the coveted seat in the Square-window. There are five little tables, each provided with six chairs of wood and wicker.

You enter and seat yourself. Velveteens bids you good-day. The young men do the same. The waiter looks up in surprise. A soldier is writing a very long letter at another table. A little yellow Jew in top-boots has finished his coffee and flicks a tiny whip against his calves, and you watch him wondering whether he is made of guttapercha.

A sort of Father Christmas comes in like Boreas. He has a brigand cloak and a huge brown comforter to defy the southern sun. No sooner has he crossed the threshold than he emits a torrent of artificial cheerfulness, strident, frosty geniality that lasts about three minutes. Velveteens rises and pats him and gives him his left hand to hold for a second; then Father Christmas subsides in a corner and yawns noisily, knowing that he will eventually have coffee.

Then a messenger comes in shirt-sleeves to fetch coffee

for an office. Then people come and try to sell mysterious goods in baskets to Velveteens. Then there is a party with a child in arms.

Now that is an event. Velveteens dances about in front of the child and makes goo-goo faces to it and eventually offers it a biscuit from one of the tins. That ceremony is scarcely over when one of the young men returns from the billiard-room. A child? That must be seen to at once. Dump into a biscuit tin and another offering is made.

The waiter's half cigar is out. He crumples his paper, blinks, and perceives you. It occurs to him that you may possibly want something. But on his way he is arrested by the child and a great grin steals over his fat face. What a happy thought, what a sublime inspiration: the child would like a biscuit. The child already has one in each hand, but with luck it may drop one; at any rate it can be bobbed to and grinned at and have its cheeks stroked. It is all Mieris or Ostade here instead of Caravaggio; there is even less gaiety than at the Gaiety Theatre.

You have long forgotten that you are usually expected to order drink in places where they drink. The man in blue remembers at last. What do you command? Oh! cognac-seltz. There's an order for them in this syrup-shop. Four small boys are already assembled on the doorstep to watch and solicit cigarettes, and the young pastry-cook from over the way vainly tries to shoo them off.

The waiter settles down to anxious consultation with two young men behind the altar. There is a long pale Greek-looking bottle of brandy, but it contains only dregs and they wonder whether you will accept them. They all lean over Velveteens for advice, but he is busy with an old peasant woman, who is submitting a stamped paper that smells of rent. They decide to try on the dregs, but at the last moment Velveteens catches them and sternly reproves the idea of such *dispetto* for the

signore. They didn't intend disrespect, but this means fetching a fresh bottle and the *signore* may not care to wait. Bah! what is another half hour?

Such a ceremony at last for the opening of the new thin pale brandy bottle. Blue Serge doubles himself up and struggles, while Velveteens and the young men gather round with advice and Father Christmas yawns to awaken the dead. Pop! Phlump! The tiniest doll's wine-glass is poured out and held up to the light and emptied into a tumbler.

Hi! That won't do!

What, more?

Yes, I am not a doll.

Two glasses really?

No, six.

Oh! these mad Englishmen.

Then all begin to wonder whether there is any soda. They squeeze every syphon on the reredos, but they are all dummies, or at least derelicts. Velveteens insists on sending out for a real one. But who is to go? The pastry-cook youth would go, only he is afraid he may not be back before closing-time. Father Christmas suggests sending one of the ten cabmen who have been in the square outside for a fortnight without ever finding a job. They begin cracking their whips at the very idea. But you accept Blue Serge's suggestion that the pump water is very good.

Blue Serge's joy is short-lived, for he finds that his pet seat by the window has now been usurped by Father Christmas, and another soldier has come in wanting another pen and ink.

"Six brandies," you announce proudly, fumbling your fob.

"Six brandies—sixpence," Blue Serge drawls in the tone of "Why ask such silly questions?"

Six pence and a penny for himself! Blue Serge almost stands to attention; you are not sure about tears of

gratitude. Well, you *are* a milor! "*Grazie, signore,*" says Blue Serge, though the expression of thanks is rare in Italy.

The young men raise their hats and thank. Velveteens thanks and hopes to see you again. The Jew looks all the way down his nose, hoping to see the last of such extravagance. Father Christmas unpacks himself and spits on the floor. Now your reputation is made. You are the Englishman who ordered and drank six brandies all at once, and then gave the waiter more than 16 per cent. on your expenditure.

I am sure Velveteens keeps a log (though none drink port here), and in it he will have recorded, "Brandy drunk here to-day by a mad Englishman."

XXII. CAPRI

September 1916

CAPRI is one of the most beautiful places in the world—or at least on any picture postcard. Sea and sky are blatantly blue, rocks everywhere recall the most garish stage-scenery, vegetation is tropically luxuriant, the view of Vesuvius and Ischia and the Bay of Naples is blinding, the sunsets have symptoms of high fever. There is no mystery. Nothing is left to the imagination.

Yet the island is not without a certain charm of its own. The little town is perched between two glaring bays and smiles a welcome from a row of friendly houses arrayed like a fortress. Erect female porters bear away your luggage on their heads from landing-stage to funicular railway and thence to your house or hotel. There are long uncomfortable steps to the church and old town; narrow cobbled streets, often completely blocked by women completely hidden beneath huge loads of hay or trees; and a broad terrace with a gentle panorama of vineyards that seem to link fleecy green arms for Bacchic dances round white flat-roofed houses.

Towards sunset this terrace is thronged by the whole foreign colony and crowds of merry children, watching for the arrival of the steamer and the papers. At Elba none seemed to care much about the progress of the war; here, however, there is a wild rush for news, the papers are torn open feverishly and they have been supplemented by many telegrams and rumours during the day; even potmen and small boys may be heard discounting Russian generalship or the policy of Greece and Roumania. When Gorizia fell, the little island was beside itself with joy. There had been a premature celebration a few days before and when the true tale came we had an orgy of hot

speeches and sweet champagne. Italian flags were kissed and German windows broken.

The climate of Capri is very exciting and new arrivals lose their sleep and their nerves; after a time they settle down to do nothing. Some have come to paint, but produce only monotonous replicas of the Faraglioni rocks and of one bearded fisherman, the perennial model of succeeding generations. The natives are goodly to look upon and famous for their mildness, crime being practically unknown.

The brown maidens have always been celebrated, ever since the days of Tiberius; very beautiful for the most part, with classical features, fine figures and deep black or marvellously russet hair. Polite, kind, soothing, honest maidens. All sorts of distinguished visitors have married them, from Italian princes and British peers to sentimental painters. I went into a cottage one day and an old peasant showed me photographs of two Eton boys, her grandchildren. A noble Earl met her daughter bearing a load of hay on her head from the village of Anacapri, loved her at first sight and made her his Countess. With native adaptability she soon learned to fill her place in Society, but I wonder whether she ever sighs over memories of her haydays.

The history of Capri has been the ministration of pleasure. Roman emperors established themselves here and you may still see the ruins of their palaces. Then the island ran wild for centuries, or rather wild boars did, almost until the modern Germans came in tourist hordes and Krupp, the munition millionaire, proceeded to corrupt the islanders once more. It is true that he has left beautiful buildings and splendid roads, but he did much harm with his avalanches of money. Where twopence would be an ordinary reward for a trifling service, he would hand out £2. He thought nothing of scattering gold among beggars or giving bank-notes to boatmen for an hour's row.

The natives now, like all Italians, are full of patriotism, but it is natural that, at the back of their heads, many of them should still regret German profusion. Indeed, the trail of the Hun has not yet disappeared. It is true that the main street of the little capital has now discarded its name of Hohenzollern, and most of the German announcements on the walls and shops have been painted out; the German chapel is locked up and overgrown with weeds; the chief coffee-house, while still retaining its clumsy German name, "*Zum Kater Hiddigeigei*," was forced to take down a Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen coat-of-arms before local patriots would go there to celebrate the capture of Gorizia. Hun habits, however, have not disappeared and the many gossips of the foreign colony find ample material for scandal.

I foresee that some firmness may be required to keep out German tourists after the war. As to that, the public opinion of Italy is already expressing itself clearly, agreeing that hereafter the allied countries must remain a preserve of the allied peoples.

XXIII. THE PRESS

WANDERERS must read local newspapers, if only to hear what is happening in Flanders, and I have now been digesting some seven or eight Italian dailies for over a year. Sometimes they are very good; sometimes very careless.

There are three of the first rank: the *Century* (*Secolo*) and *Evening Courier* (*Corriere della Sera*) of Milan, and the *Press* (*Stampa*) of Turin. The *Press* was Giolitti's organ, and incurred unpopularity by opposing the war, but has now accepted facts patriotically as all Italians have done. These papers all have brilliant foreign correspondents and often publish luminous miscellaneous articles. When I return to England, I shall continue to read them regularly.

I shall also take in the *National Idea* (*Idea Nazionale*) of Rome, which reflects a healthy, growing movement for the independent development of Italy; it shows up abuses when it can find any, and is intolerant of the possibility that a great country can remain the playground of vulgar tourists.

Other Roman papers, of which the chief is perhaps the *Tribune* (*Tribuna*), are bright but exiguous and suffer from the scarcity of paper. Milan, rather than Rome, is the journalistic and literary centre. It is as though the majority of Londoners read nothing but the *Manchester Guardian*.

The rival papers at Naples, the *Day* (*Giorno*) and *Morning* (*Mattino*), are run, oddly enough, by a husband and wife, the wife being Matilde Serao, the novelist; and the *Rome* (*Roma*)—an odd name for a paper at Naples. They have a serious rival in the Roman *Journal of Italy* (*Giornale d'Italia*), which can be bought at Naples

simultaneously and lays itself out for South Italian news; and many are content to wait till the *Evening Courier* arrives from Milan.

Apart from the *Century* and *Evening Courier*, no Italian paper has what would be considered a large circulation in England.

A few journalists are well paid and rank with statesmen. £2000 is not an unknown figure for a series of exceptional articles. But writers who are not on the staff of great papers receive a paltry pittance, though they are usually active and intelligent.

The most entertaining part of some newspapers, especially at Rome and Naples, is the agony column, where the secrets of alcoves are revealed with great frankness. This from the *Journal of Italy*:—

"For a vow I would marry a blind man who has lost his sight in the war, and is a resident of Rome.—*Fiammetta* (Little Flame), Post-Office, Rome."

I answered, and said I was writing a book about Italy at War, and should be much interested if she would give me some particulars for publication.

The following reply came on paper with a half-inch black border:—

"Most Gentle Sir,—I willingly reply to your letter received this moment, being proud to have attracted the attention of an English writer by my little advertisement. I belong to a very good family, that was entirely destroyed by the earthquake at Avezzano, which left me alone in miserable conditions. I give Italian and French lessons, but earn practically nothing owing to the war, and am living in sad solitude of soul. I lost the man to whom I was engaged in the ruins of Avezzano, but now I feel that he will forgive me if I seek a new family. I made a vow by his memory to dedicate myself only to some unhappy man, who needs a strong, faithful, and unfortunate woman capable of understanding the misfortunes of others. I

had several answers to my advertisement—one from Rome and the others from outside. I answered all those who are deprived of the light, and if I can come to an understanding with one of them, I will be to him a spouse, a sister, or a mother, I will lay all my tenderness at his feet. I hope your book will have a brilliant success (*fulgida gloria*), and I thank you for taking an interest in our lovely Italy, now proving herself so heroically strong. I should like to write a book of verses, but I lack the means, though my poems have been much appreciated."

The letter illustrates Latin sentiment—high-flown without becoming absurd. And here another note is struck:—

"I DREAMED of great ideals. Reality disillusioned me. Struggles are killing me. Young, innocent (*intemerata*), pleasing, cultured, most affectionate, I would marry an elderly man of culture, health, means, and noble sentiment who would assure me a peaceful, affectionate existence.—Reply in these columns to *Half-Beaten*."

So far no reply has appeared, perhaps because few are looking for sadness in these sad times.

Here are Darby-and-Joan possibilities with a faint aroma of lavender:—

"ELDERLY GENTLEWOMAN, noble soul, refined education, would make the acquaintance of a highly-cultivated aristocrat, sixty, for intellectual conversation. Unsuitable replies are not desired.—Post-Office, Rome."

Italy does not provide the same facilities as England for courtship. Indeed, marriages are made in lawyers' offices more often than in Heaven. So this is not an unusual way of seeking an introduction:—

"LADY admired tramw. 14, met this morning same line. Forgive if I use this my only method to ask you to let me intoxicate myself sometimes in the most vivid light of your eyes. I assure you of my deep consideration and discretion."

Let us hope the romance may not end like the following:—

"RESTORE immediately all my letters and the medal. Otherwise I shall know where to apply.—M. M. C."

XXIV. POST-OFFICES

In a land where all is well, criticism becomes pardonable, even welcome. I therefore permit myself to say that there is room for improvement in the Italian Post-Office. At the same time, I beg my readers to discount my strictures, for I use post-offices a great deal and my patience is not inexhaustible. Even in England I have sometimes felt peevishly disposed towards the comptrollers of correspondence. And in France . . . Well, Italy is superior to France in every way.

Milan has a post-office that is perhaps the most convenient in the world. There is a writing-room, where you may devote yourself to your letters in a chair at a desk as though you were in the best of clubs; you may use a copying press; there are people to tie up your parcels with professional skill, to weigh your letters, inform you as to the departure of mails; you may even buy foreign stamps. And I believe there are similar conveniences in many other big towns. The organisation of express-letters might well be imitated in other countries. There are no irritating formalities over the counter as in England. All you have to do is to affix a special 2½d. stamp and drop your letter into the nearest box. It will then be watched with special care throughout its journey to any part of Italy and despatched to the addressee's house by special messenger immediately on arrival.

But woe betide the holders of telegraphic money-orders! It is a reasonable supposition that people who receive telegraphic money-orders are in a hurry for their money. In France, you will be refused at the counter unless you possess some unlikely document, but an official will bring you the money to your house after the lapse of several hours. In Italy you are refused altogether unless you are

personally known to the clerks or possess a particular document: your permit of sojourn will not do, nor (as a general rule) your passport with its attested photograph. It is true that you may turn over the money-order to some one else who is known to the clerks or possesses the necessary document.

I ran short of money at Milan and telegraphed for supplies. After waiting about most of the day, I received a telegraphic money-order and heaved a sigh of relief. I expended my last coin on a cab to the post-office only to find that telegraphic money-orders were not cashed after 4 p.m. So I put off my departure and returned to the post-office next morning. There I found over twenty people forming a tail at the pigeon-hole. After an hour, my turn came and I was told I could be paid only if I brought some one whom the clerks knew to identify me; and I knew no one in Milan. Of course I extricated myself somehow eventually, but it was very inconvenient.

Nor are all postal officials as honest as they might be. It is a favourite trick to overcharge for parcels and registered letters. I only discovered this by accident after a long series of frauds. I would bring a light letter to be registered: the right price was 50c. (25c. for postage and 25c. for registration). The clerk handed me a receipt for 75c., which I had to pay as I could not dispute the accuracy of his scales. When I had departed, he would affix a 50c. stamp and pocket 25c.

Worse tricks have been played me over the exchange. For a long time I received small remittances by money-order from England. The right exchange was then 27 lire to the £1, but the postmaster showed me a form made out at Bologna authorising him to pay only 25 lire 20c. I submitted for a while, as the loss was not great; then I had my remittances sent in £1 notes; but one fine day, when the exchange had risen above 29 lire to the £, I received a money-order for £20 and the postmaster still proposed to pay me at the rate of 25 lire 20c. That meant

a loss of about £3, so I protested with some vigour. The answer was a suave reference to the document from Bologna. I submitted that the 25 lire 20c. must mean payment in gold.

"Gold be blowed!" (*Ma che oro!*) was the terse reply.

"All right," I said, "tell me where to complain—to Genoa, Rome, or Bologna?"

There was no answer for a long time. The postmaster took a sheet of paper and began to make elaborate calculations. I grew impatient and repeated my inquiry about the complaint.

"You have complained to *me*," he replied irritably; "I will give you the answer in a few minutes."

And presently he offered me a sum that worked out at about 28 lire to the £. I grumbled that this was not enough, but he said it was all he could offer and I might take it or leave it. I took it to save trouble, but I reflected that he had cheated me over all my previous money-orders and had nearly succeeded in cheating me this time on a larger scale.

The same postmaster accepted a telegram from me to a telegraphic address in London and informed me next day that telegrams were not allowed to telegraphic addresses in time of war. Meanwhile, he had doubtless pocketed the money.

From Savona I sent off a very important telegram and learned after about a month that it had never reached London. I wrote to the superior office at Genoa and was informed that no telegram for London had been handed in at Savona on the day in question. Then I sent my receipt. Over a month later, I was coolly informed, without a word of apology, that it had been impossible to send off my telegram, and an order for the amount was sent me, which I cashed after much patient labour.

An English newspaper correspondent tells me that the Rome post-office is very honest about telegrams. Whenever a passage is deleted by the censor, he receives an

order for the return of the amount he has paid for that passage. But the order will be paid only to him in person and that means waiting about for hours, so he keeps the orders until they amount to a good round sum.

A certain slackness is excusable in war-time, when many officials have gone off to the front, but the cynical attitude of those who remain is often exasperating. In small provincial towns, it is not unusual to see a dozen people waiting while the officials smoke cigarettes, count coppers and stack them in little piles, read newspapers, or stroll about and gossip. If any one remonstrates, the answer is " Patience! " On the other hand, I have seen people come in after closing-time and obtain the registration of letters as a favour without much trouble.

The chief vexations are over parcels and change. I have sometimes had to go three or four times before I could despatch a parcel. First, I would be told that the man in charge of the forms was absent. On his return, there would be no customs' declarations. Later on, the man with the forms had departed again.

The sight of a fifty-lire note often caused consternation. " This is not a bank," the clerk would remonstrate irritably.

The post-office at Portoferraio often ran short of stamps altogether and one had to go and buy them at the nearest tobacconist's. Another nuisance was the refusal of signatures to money-orders in any but black ink. Even blue-black ink was refused, though it becomes black in a few hours.

The fact is, Italy suffers from too much bureaucracy, and most postmasters are appointed for political reasons: no consensus of local complaint would ever avail to oust them. But there are signs that this small grievance will be remedied after the war.

Moreover, the Italians are to be congratulated on the tact and forbearance they have displayed in the matter of censorship. Before Italy declared war, my letters bore

marks showing they had been opened by the authorities in England. Then for some weeks they were stamped "Bologna, Foreign Post," about half of them being restuck with flimsy paper and marked "Verified." Now for many months they have been arriving apparently intact, though sometimes after long delays. But all foreign correspondence still went to Bologna until recently, and of course letters from neutral countries are subjected to special vigilance.

The censorship was carried on in an old convent at Bologna under a chief who knew eight languages, and perhaps the oddest collection of mortals had been pressed into his service. There were several missionaries, tanned and wizened by tropical suns, waiting to pounce upon rare hieroglyphics in Abyssinian, Arabic, Hindustanee or Swahili, and I believe there was an Albanian censor, though I have failed to ascertain that any one understood Basque. There was an old American stock-jobber, who specialised in commerce and finance. There were various cosmopolitan journalists who professed to tell a real newspaper article from a bogus one. Various experts dealt with their own special subjects, which ranged from naval and military matters to such apparently innocent topics as art, poetry, science and metaphysics. For anything at all suspect had to be passed on at once to the detective staff.

All sorts of devices have been used for conveying secret messages, and the detectives needed the most elaborate apparatus: magnifying glasses, microscopes, tests for invisible inks and chemicals, besides having very sharp eyes for possible ciphers. A favourite hiding-place is underneath the stamps, and any eccentric arrangement of stamps might easily lead to a suspicion of a code. Fantastic phrases or strange paragraphing should also be avoided by those who do not want delay.

Oddly enough, post-cards come in for even more scrutiny than letters. Spies seem to think that nobody

will bother about so humble and innocent a method of correspondence, but there is nothing so simple as conveying a piece of important information by a few marks on a caricature or by some ordinary compliments. In this connection, I am reminded of a man at Nice, who went by the nickname of " The Pasha " and had an extravagant habit of always sending telegrams instead of letters to his friends. When he telegraphed half across Europe, " Lovely weather down here just now, but have a beastly cold.—Pasha," the result was that the French police worried him for many a long day.

At present, inland telegrams must be written in Italian; foreign telegrams must be approved by the police authorities before despatch.

I am told that incriminating letters usually go to their destination, but the local police receive a word of warning at the same time.

XXV. THE PINCH OF WAR

When I reached Rome one bitter March day, I was told that the British Embassy had had to give up fires because coal was £9 a ton. At the hotels with the loudest advertisements of *termosifone* (central heating), you turned handles in vain hopes of hot air. Even a luxurious professor from King's College, Cambridge, was reduced to shiver over an oil-stove at 1fr. 50c. a day and felt quite extravagant when he cooked a buffalo-lunch for his many friends. Otherwise, the pinch of war has not been felt seriously by such strangers as remained in Italy.

So far, too, the war has produced little material suffering in the country. Agriculture has not suffered at all, though, of course, women have had to do a good deal of man's work. Barefooted women in the act of sowing seeds can be very graceful in this graceful land.

The main sufferers are towns near the frontier and towns dependent on tourists. Turin and Milan, for instance, have ceased exporting; Genoa has seen comparative quietude in her port, and like Naples has ceased to entertain emigrants. Venice, as a show-place in the war-zone, is probably in the worst case of all; Rome has lost not only tourists but much of the political and official movement. Soldiers, however, have replaced tourists and drones everywhere, and kept many tradesmen going. Brindisi, from a dead-alive outlet to the East, has become quite a lively and prosperous resort for the armies and navies of the allies.

The pinch of poverty is felt chiefly by the families of soldiers at the front, and critics fail to find a plausible remedy. The families of conscripts receive nothing, the reasonable argument being that, war or no war, the young men would still be away with the colours. The families

of reservists have the chief grievance. Take the case of a mechanic who earned 6 or 7 lire a day. While he is at war the Government pays his wife 70c. a day and 30c. for each child. Some big firms double this dole by a levy on the wages of the workers who remain. A mother must be sixty to share in the relief. In villages, a wife receives only 60c. and 20c. for each child. When a man dies at the front, the authorities pay the widow 50 lire a month till she marries again, and big firms continue the daily dole for ten months.

Now this might just have sufficed to keep bodies and souls together if prices had remained stationary. Before the war, a man could live fairly well on a few pence a day. Here is an Elban budget: a kilogramme of zerri (a sweet little fish, about as big as a sardine and as white as a sole), 10c.; ½ kg. of macaroni, 30c.; 1 kg. of bread, 35c.; 1 kg. of potatoes, 10c.; 1 kg. of charcoal, 8c.; 1 litre of wine, 15c. Total 1 lira 8c. (say 10d.). A couple of lire sufficed for a family of four or five, including the rent of a three-roomed house at 5 or 6 lire the month. Thus a bread-winner earning 3 lire could save nearly 1 lira a day all the year round after paying for clothes and other simple necessaries. Now his rent has risen to 20 or 30 lire, his boots cost 17 or 18 lire instead of 8, and almost everything else has followed suit.

There is a sort of camorra or secret trust among tradesmen to keep prices up, and those who were quite ready to endure the pinch of war became restive when starved to enhance the profits of naughty speculators. At last some local authorities thought fit to intervene, and it is to be hoped that their example will be followed throughout the kingdom. For instance, the municipality of Portoferraio (Elba) proclaimed a maximum price for provisions on December 19, 1915, with modifications on January 14, 1916. The central government has also imposed some maximum prices, and various necessaries are likely to become State monopolies if the war lasts.

The following table may be of interest:

	Before the war	Dec. 18, 1915	Dec. 19, 1915	Jan. 14, 1916	
	l. c.	l. c.	l. c.	l. c.	
Wine . .	30	1 60	1 30	—	per flask of 2 litres
Bread . .	35	55–60	50–60	—	kg.
Beefsteak . .	80	1 30	1 10	1 0	lb. (=½ kg.)
Eggs . .	15	35–40	35	30	couple
Macaroni . .	60	90	75–80	83	kg.
Sugar . .	1 40	1 70	1 55	1 85	kg.
Beans . .	30	60	55–60	65	kg.
Red Mullet .	35	1–1 10	60–80	—	lb. (=½ kg.)
Zerri . .	10	1 20	60	—	kg.
Indian corn flour	15	50	40	42	kg.
Charcoal . .	8	20	—	—	kg.

Milk (45c. the litre) and butter (4 lire 70c. the kg.) have remained almost stationary.

Forced prices are interesting to watch, because, if I mistake not, they have never succeeded in history, in spite of the grim state socialism of mediæval monarchies. Here they have benefited the well-to-do, who can threaten to call the police at the first attempt to overcharge. But those who live from hand to mouth say they are as badly off as ever. Credit is well-nigh universal, for every tradesman knows exactly what everybody earns and he likes to make his customers his bondsmen. If he has a bad bit of cheese, he can compel a debtor to take it. If his stock of beans is excessive he can palm most of it off at once. And he can score up whatever prices he pleases. Take the man with an income of 100 lire a month. He comes in for a kg. of macaroni.

"Here it is. I am putting down 90c. for it."

"Oh! but the new regulations have fixed the price at 75c."

"All right, pay up the 500 lire you owe me, or I shall issue a writ and sell you up."

The victim dare not often appeal to the police. But when he does, he is sure of redress and an offending tradesman would be fined severely.

People in the country, small peasant-farmers and fishermen, have suffered least of all, for they supply most of their own material needs. They have always lived within their income and often accumulate quite respectable nest-eggs. The fishermen appear to have been the sharpest to take advantage of war prices, though their harvest has never been more abundant. Their chief crime in the popular eye has been to raise the poor man's zerri twelvefold, and all other fish have been rushed up considerably. From Elba they exported most of their best catches to what they call " the continent," or, at least, to parts where forced prices had not yet been imposed. Now, however, the municipality forbids exportation until local needs have been satisfied. The result was that practically no fish appeared on the home market. You may prevent a man from selling above a certain price, but you cannot compel him to go out to sea and catch fish.

Wages have undoubtedly risen, but by no means in proportion to the cost of living, and employment is not so easy to obtain as one would imagine with most of the men away. A reason for this is that many works have had to close down, chiefly through lack of coal. There is plenty of coal for sale in England, but ships to convey it are very difficult to find.

Here are a couple of cases from Elba. Under my flat, there lived a mother with two little children and two sons of twenty-one and nineteen. The elder had just gone to the front. Each earned 3 lire 75c., so the family budget ran to 7 lire 50c. a day, and there was comparative comfort. Now it was only 3 lire 75c. and, the rent being 30 lire a month, there was very little to eat.

I also know a poor old woman of fifty-nine, whose son, a reservist now at the front, used to earn 5 lire a day. As she was not yet sixty, she received no official dole. La Monarchica, a charitable society, gave her 30c. a day, and the Red Cross subscribed a few small sums when

special appeals had been made. Her state of starvation can scarcely be imagined. Though she was under sixty, she looked eighty, bent almost double, withered, trembling, half blind; and she had a delicate daughter who needed nourishing food. She owed 18 lire a month for rent, but cannot possibly pay until her son returns to work. As though her cup were not sufficiently full, she has just heard that he is in hospital with typhoid, and she cries about him all night.

P.S.—ROME, *February* 1917. The pinch of war is now being felt at last in a small way. Meat is not sold on Thursdays or Fridays; cakes, sweets, biscuits, etc., are not sold on Saturdays, Sundays, or Mondays. A restaurant's bill of fare is restricted to ten items and a customer's courses are limited. Sugar costs 2.50 the kilo. and is sold only in small quantities; butter is scarce; otherwise there is little cause for complaint except among caterers and consumers of snacks. A rich householder could consume what he pleased, but economy is the patriotic order of the day.

PART IV—POSTSCRIPTS

I. A JUSTIFICATION OF ITALY

March 3, 1916

THERE is now in Italy a restlessness that almost reflects the great national uprising of last May. While every one is satisfied with the heroism and steady progress of the army, an uncomfortable idea remains that critics think Italy might have done more. As the *Secolo* says, Italy feels that the enthusiasm which greeted her intervention is beginning to cool among the Allies. I hope to show that criticism is at least premature, that Italy has done all she can, and done it very well. But that does not interfere with the fact that the time is fast approaching when she ought to declare war against Germany.[1]

To understand the present position, it is necessary to recall recent history. On the fatal 3rd of August 1914, Italy would have committed suicide by going to war. She had neither money nor credit nor arms nor any of the barest military necessaries. By adhering to the Triple Alliance, she could at most have diverted a few French army corps. By defying Austria, she would have invited an immediate occupation of Milan, if not of Rome. Not a soul in the peninsula dreamed of war in his wildest moments. Blame neutralists as much as you like later on, but they were then absolutely wise. The Government (still, remember, under the dictatorship of Giolitti) proceeded to restore the army and the exchequer with amazing speed and efficiency. Italy was soon able to negotiate with Germany and Austria on terms of equality. But if they had negotiated more intelligently they could easily have assured her neutrality.

[1] Which has, of course, been done.

In May 1915, Italy was divided into two parties: (1) the neutralists, who included an overwhelming majority in Parliament, practically all the clergy and aristocracy, and nearly every man of business; (2) the interventionists, who consisted of old Garibaldians, poets, sentimentalists, vague Imperialists, and the average man in the street. Even if Giolitti was the foreign hireling his enemies assert, he could make out quite a good case for his policy, which was supported by the constitutional machinery of the country. War was still a gamble, and a prudent statesman had plenty of excuses for thinking Italy might well be contented with what he called a *parecchio* (that may be translated as " something ")—some sort of compensation from Austria. His mistake was that, regarding the Ministry as his warming-pan, he aroused public odium by negotiating with Germany and Austria behind their backs. There were noisy demonstrations in many parts of Italy, and young men ran about crying " War or Revolution! " The general belief is that Giolitti was intimidated by the loud voice of the people. With this I am disposed to disagree. He is not easy to intimidate, whereas the army would have obeyed the executive, and a hasty revolution would have been quickly suppressed. It is still very difficult to guess who made the war. Some say the King. If so, it is the first time he has departed from strict constitutional practice. My own opinion is that the " warming-pan " Ministry seized the occasion to shake off Giolitti's dictatorship and at the same time develop a patriotic policy. Salandra's sudden resignation, the unhindered street demonstrations, the triumphant return of a reconstructed Ministry, all the details and incidents of those dramatic days confirm this opinion. But the authorship of the State-stroke is unimportant. The point is that, both in her neutrality and in her intervention, Italy acted with profound wisdom, as a good European.

It is not, however, to be imagined that a party comprising all the leading sections of society, all the chief

manufacturers, traders, intellectuals, and wire-pullers suddenly vanished into thin air on May 24, 1915. Being patriots, they acquiesced in intervention as soon as war was declared, and they hoped Italy would win. But they retained their views on foreign policy, which are summed up in the phrase *sacro egoismo*, hallowed selfishness, a phrase not really so selfish as it sounds. Their apology may be summed up somewhat as follows: "Italy has made great sacrifices and is running great risks. For the sake of her whole future, for the sake of her very existence, those risks must be reduced to a minimum. Let us fight Austria, if we must, and try to obtain the 'unredeemed provinces,' the control of the Adriatic, and commercial expansion towards the East. But let us remember that Germany is very strong. She has already overrun Belgium and Poland and Serbia and seven provinces of France. God did not protect Belgium; what if He should not defend the right? What if Germany were to win? All our labours of the last fifty years would be undone. Italy might revert to a geographical expression."

This explains why Italy declared war against Austria only, and how, when Prince Buelow left Rome, after the failure of nearly all his marvellous diplomacy, he is said to have obtained a convention for the protection of private property. This has been represented by a high authority as a one-sided arrangement, seeing that Italians had nothing in Germany, while Germans owned property in Italy worth at least sixteen millions sterling. The question of private property was, however, no more than a detail in a large understanding. It is true that Bavarian troops have fought on the Italian frontier and German submarines have not spared Italian ships, but the non-declaration of war between Germany and Italy was no accident, and both countries have so far been fighting each other as little as possible. If Germany defeated the civilised Powers, she would be expected to make allowances for the comparative peacefulness of Italy.

Now, however, Italy is entering upon a third phase. After neutrality came what Italians frankly style *la nostra guerra* (our war). Now an agitation is arising for a *guerra unica*, a whole-hearted war in the ranks of the Allies. It was to initiate this agitation that Briand came to Rome the other day with much *brio;* interventionists are supporting it by a heated campaign in the Press and on platforms; and pressure is being brought to bear upon the reassembled Parliament. In fact, Italy seems to be going through the process of making up her mind not whether but when to declare war against Germany.

And Italy's Allies will do well to allow her to make up her mind in her own way, in her own good time. Her situation is so delicate and her wisdom has been so irreproachable that it is not for remote spectators to disturb her patience or precipitate her decision. The very nature of her battleground, with its ice-clad precipices, renders progress slow, and metres count there as much as kilometres do elsewhere. Italy has already done great deeds for the common cause. But for her stubborn resistance on the Isonzo, the Russian victory at Tarnopol last August, and the Russian advances in Bukovina and Eastern Galicia, would have been impossible. As I have pointed out elsewhere, she could not have rescued Montenegro without devoting her whole navy to the task, besides restricting the priceless efforts of her army on the Austrian border. She is quite alive to the importance of straining every nerve to secure the common victory, but her own prudent leaders are the sole judges of the state of her war-sinews and the progress of her military convalescence.

Mischief only is caused by idle talk, such as has just been quoted by the *Stampa:* "Italy counts in this war about as much as Belgium"; "The Alps are not worth more than the Carpathians"; "The Italian war is only an episode"; "Austria does not take Italy seriously." And Italy is more distressed by British impatience than by another. Apart from gratitude for our help in her

emancipation, she cherishes a keen admiration for everything British. *Roba inglese* (English stuff) is a proverbial phrase for the very best; and Italians imitate our manners as well as our clothes. Here, for instance, is a characteristic comment from an Italian correspondent at the British front: " ' After all,' an officer said to me, ' we all have the same training, and that's the only thing that counts here.' And training is education as Englishmen understand it to-day. They talk of ' training ' for men, just as they do for dogs and horses. Education means something quite different: instruction, culture. Training teaches them to live in a world that contains other people too; not to give too much or too little importance to any man; never to acknowledge themselves beaten; and, incidentally, to eat without making a noise, to clean their teeth, to say ' Thank you.' Their penultimate commandment is ' Remember that you are an Englishman '; their last, and greatest of all, ' Remember that that fellow there is an Englishman too.' "

Many parallels might be drawn between Italians and Englishmen. If we are insular, they are peninsular. Both are proud and sentimental. Both have had to build up strong armies out of next to nothing. So far, neither has been invaded during this war. And Italians openly confess their aspiration to make Italy the England of the Mediterranean.

If we are tempted to impatience, let us remember the phrase of a British Tommy, which Italians never tire of quoting: " It is only the first five years of a war which matter."

II. A NATIONAL MINISTRY

June 1916

ITALY has passed through her political crisis with great calmness, amounting almost to indifference. Her attitude has been very different from the excitement of May 1915, when students surged into the Parliament and mob orators invaded private houses and some one actually began to build a barricade. The only murmurs against Salandra's government regarded his cautious reticence, a certain strictness of censorship over extra-military subjects, perhaps undue indulgence towards the neutralist elements of his majority, and consequent hesitations about declaring war on Germany. With a few compliments and concessions, certainly with a few changes to satisfy ambitious office-seekers, he might easily have remained in power.

The country was anxious about the Austrian offensive from the Trentino, but by no means in a panic. I heard pessimists groaning in coffee-houses that they could foresee Venice once more in the power of the Hapsburgs or that an Austrian governor had already been chosen for Vicenza, but belief in victory remained practically unanimous. As for attacks in Parliament—well, politics had always been a game and really the extreme Socialists ought to have better manners, but what did it matter while State and Army were directed by able, patriotic men?

Indeed, the ministerial defeat of June 10 was very little anticipated. Up to the very last its possibility was contemptuously denied by the principal newspapers. Various groups were ill-tempered and wanted to give the Government a lesson, but they did not expect that their

votes would turn it out. Salandra himself, usually the calmest of men, was so much surprised that he threw his portfolio on the floor and called his critics liars.

When the deed was done, there was a certain mild regret, but this was soon dispelled by the suggestion that here was an excellent opportunity for forming a national ministry, comprising the best men of all parties. By Italian constitutional practice, it is not the retiring Premier but the Speakers of both Houses from whom the King receives advice about the succession. In this instance the lot fell with one consent upon PAOLO BOSELLI, the Father of the Chamber of Deputies. Almost before the excitement over Salandra's defeat had died down, all were whispering the name of Boselli. No one had ever thought of him before as a possible Premier; now no one dreamed of anybody else. Even the fact that he is seventy-eight years of age is mentioned only to heighten admiration for his wonderful activity.

He has had an honourable, uneventful career. He has not an enemy in the world. No breath of scandal has ever come within his atmosphere. He belongs to the very centre of the Central Party, or, as we should phrase it, he has a cross-bench mind. He is not without official experience, having occupied many minor posts under Crispi and one under Sonnino during a period of twenty years. At the same time, he is quite simple in life and mind. During the recent negotiations for the formation of his ministry, he received every one in his bedroom, for his home is one large corner room overlooking the Villa Borghese at Rome, and he sleeps there on a small iron bedstead behind a screen.

Those negotiations passed off with a smoothness previously unknown in Italian political circles. Everybody was anxious to oblige the new Premier personally; all individual ambitions were cast aside in view of the gravity of the hour. Even that stern, unbending Socialist, LEONIDAS BISSOLATI, the leader of the Reformist group

of Socialists who favoured intervention in the war, came in at once almost without a murmur, though he had always been vehement in his refusals of office, and his accession afforded a tower of strength, assuring confidence for the new government. He is what Italians call a *tipo*, an original, an oddity, almost a crank. Fancy a politician without a vestige of personal ambition! Was there ever such madness outside England? Then he is that rare bird, an honest Socialist, one who cares more for Socialism than for Socialists. Once upon a time, his party passed a resolution that duelling was barbarous and inhuman: he hastened to pick a quarrel and fight with swords, pinking his man. Again, the official Socialists were against the war: he was one of the first to volunteer, won a medal for valour, was severely wounded, and would now be back at the front again if Boselli had not beguiled him into office with that wheedling way of his. The only thing his contemporaries find to laugh over is that he will swim in the Tiber every morning. But then Boselli sleeps with his windows open all the year round. They really might be mad Englishmen. He may be described imperfectly as an Italian John Burns, with John Burns's vigour and integrity but without his inclination to go off at inopportune tangents. He is member for Rome, and was very useful in influencing his many adherents there during the war demonstrations last year.

The next step was to induce Baron SONNINO to remain on as Foreign Secretary. He was naturally sore over the fall of Salandra's ministry, wherein he was almost co-Premier; but Salandra added his persuasions to those of Boselli, and this was not the time for cherishing grievances or claiming well-earned repose. It would have been an obvious inconvenience for the Allies to lose a statesman who has held all the ropes all through the European war. Sonnino is a very silent, shrewd man of Hebrew-English origin, in his seventieth year. Practically his whole life has been devoted to politics and he has been twice

Premier for short periods. His integrity is above reproach; indeed, it was he who put an end to the corruption of the Press and the manipulation of elections by local prefects.

The third pillar of the new Government is Signor ORLANDO, who was Privy Seal under Salandra and now takes over the Home Office. He is a man of ability and moderation, and arouses no criticism, even from extreme malcontents like the editor of the Naples *Mattino*, most of whose comments on the crisis have been relentlessly obliterated by the censor.

Probably the chief surprise and at the same time the wisest move has been the appointment of Signor MEDA, a leader of the Clerical Party, to a post in the new Government. It marks an epoch in the history of the relations between Church and State. The very idea would have been laughed to scorn in those not distant days when the strict order from the Vatican was *nè elettori, nè eletti*: no good Catholic was to stand for Parliament or even vote at an election. That order was proved to have been a mistake by the consequences of its revocation, for the participation of Clericals in Parliament has done much to smooth away misunderstandings, and the appointment of a Clerical minister is bound to have a further pacificatory effect, might easily lead to a Concordat after the war. Meanwhile the Official Socialists (anti-war group) and a few extreme anti-Clericals are displaying violent hostility to the appointment.

The inclusion of UBALDO COMANDINI, one of the Republican leaders, was also a clever stroke, and must disarm dangerous opposition. The Republicans were rather strong before the War. Then the King's glorious, simple heroism at the front won every heart. But the Republicans recovered some ground by displaying heroism too, and Comandini was one of many among them who volunteered. He is also a journalist, but such a poor one that he cannot have been chosen for that reason alone.

The new Government, however, has a decided journalistic complexion. Boselli began as a journalist. His right-hand man, Bissolati, has edited the *Avanti*, a Socialist daily, and maintained himself chiefly by journalism. One of Boselli's very first pronouncements when he began to form his ministry was an assurance that the press-censorship would be relaxed in non-military matters. Then he made the unprecedented departure of calling in several editors for consultation as to his appointments so as to secure a good press. Now he has conferred a portfolio on Senator RUFFINI, chiefly for his journalistic influence.

The important point to remember about the new Government is that it enjoys wider confidence than its predecessor, and is no less deeply pledged to continue the war with all possible vigour until the victory of the civilised Powers is secured.

One reflection obtrudes itself throughout these hideous times: very many of the men who are now making the world's history have never previously made history for themselves.



Aquileia. The King of Italy and the Prince of Wales Visit the Baptistery

III. ENGLAND AND ITALY

MISUNDERSTANDINGS would be too harsh a word, but there have been occasional failures in England to understand, or at least omissions to understand, the Italian point of view; also in Italy to understand the English point of view. And Italians are rightly very sensitive of criticism at a time when they are putting forth their whole strength to fight for their national life.

There was almost distress when a Mr. Houston, M.P., raised rather hostile questions about Italy's non-declaration of war against Germany. The *Giornale d'Italia* wrote as follows: "Ought we to notice Mr. Houston's poisonous insinuations against Italy? It is not worth while. The bonds which unite us to England are too strong and sincere for the buzz of a tiresome midge to shake the confident and immutable confidence of English and Italian public opinion."

Then Mr. Steed, a high authority on Austria, wrote an irritating article in the *Edinburgh Review*, to suggest that Italian conquests should be handed over to the Slavs after the war. This was quoted by the whole Italian press with the sort of indulgent sorrow due to a smack in the eye from a friend.

Then again there was disquiet when Mr. Sidney Low wrote an article demanding that Italy should send half a million men to the French front. The Italians reply that all the men they can equip are needed for their own front; that, even if they are helped in the matter of equipment, each country ought to be self-sufficing; and that, if an Italian expeditionary corps were available, it would not be most usefully employed in France, for Germany can best be beaten by first crushing Austria.

I submit that it is almost unpatriotic to criticise our allies in time of war.

The Italians have set us a good example in this respect by their dignified reserve, though many of them think they have grounds for complaint. I have noticed an uneasy idea that England might be doing more, but that is only the general impatience over the slowness of the war. There is also a notion among the insufficiently informed that England has been making profit out of the war at the expense of Italy. This notion has doubtless been stimulated by German agents. It has not influenced serious thinkers and has been admirably refuted by Dr. Mario Borsa, the brilliant editor of the *Secolo*, in a little book called *Italy and England*.

"In the train which bore me from Folkestone to London," he writes, "I reflected over that strange subtle spirit of diffidence which has filtered into our people against England. Why? There has been no change. It is still the same placid old England, where our refugees found an asylum of peace and liberty last century, the England which we have all known and loved in her novelists, poets, statesmen, customs, liberal institutions, noble ideals. Anglo-Italian relations have always been good. There have never been serious motives for dissension or rancour between the two peoples. Even when Italy entered the Triple Alliance, she always excluded the possibility of a conflict with England. All appreciated that the maintenance of friendly relations with London was the best guarantee of our Mediterranean interests. Yet during this terrible historical crisis and especially during the last few months we have seen the formation and gradual growth of a current hostile to England. Everywhere one hears expressions of discontent and resentment, criticisms, recriminations, and depreciations. The aims and intentions of England are exposed to doubt, the old stereotypes of 'perfidious Albion' and 'British selfishness' have returned into

circulation; people do not know, do not understand, and therefore do not appreciate the very important part which England fills in the great struggle wherein the destinies of the world and of civilisation are at stake; no credit is given for the colossal effort she has made and is making in her own interest and in that of all the allies; her diplomatic and military mistakes are exaggerated; her deficiencies are paraded and no account is taken of her difficulties; people talk through their hats ignorantly, idly, like coffee-house babblers, and, instead of troubling to examine and ascertain facts, give free rein to their prejudices, to calumnies, to ineptitudes of every kind. Why? Whence comes this unjust, absurd, and dangerous current of anglophobia? Who began to speak ill of the English in Italy? The Germans."

Dr. Borsa has better opportunities of judging Italian public opinion than I have. If I went only by what I have seen and heard, I should deny the existence of Italian diffidence and hostility towards England. But Italians are so vastly polite that they would not dream of criticising England in the presence of an Englishman.

With regard to the suggestion that England might be doing more, Dr. Borsa writes, " England always begins her wars badly, slowly, with mistakes and imprudences; but she always comes well out of them because she is persevering and strong. The English are the first to recognise this themselves. Thus, using a sporting phrase, they are wont to say that they are bad starters but good stayers. They are always beaten at first, but instead of discouraging them this spurs them on. Little by little they summon up their strength, they gain ground, they tire out their adversary, they catch him up, they pass him, they are the first to reach the winning-post."

With regard to the alleged profits derived by England during the war, Dr. Borsa says " it would not be worth while to notice such stupid or malignant opinions if there

were not people who are ignorant of the facts and permit themselves to be influenced in perfect good faith."

First comes the question of the exchange. The pound sterling, which, by weight of gold, is normally worth 25.225 Italian lire, has risen during the war above 34 lire. That is of course due to the natural laws of exchange and circulation, but ignorant people have represented it as a piece of British sharp practice.

Then there is the question of freights. The ignorant noticed that coal rose to 360 per cent. of its former price at Genoa and that the British government was taking 50 per cent. of war-profits, so they concluded that England was starving Italy. But of course freights only rose because war had diminished the number of ships available for carrying coal. Moreover, as Dr. Borsa points out, " British shipping companies have made huge profits, but so have Italian, French, and neutral shippers, and the British shipping companies are not to be confused with the British nation and the British government: the nation has protested and the government has intervened. It would have been impossible to require more from the British government than what it has done. On the other hand, the Italian government ought to have set its house in order and established a control over the Italian mercantile marine and especially disencumbered the port of Genoa, for if freights to Italy have reached a fabulous height this is largely due to the congestion of the chief Italian port. British or neutral ships arrive with coal and, instead of being able to discharge immediately, they are obliged to wait their turn and remain idle for two, three, or even four weeks with the aggravation that the Italian importers have departed from custom and refused to pay demurrage (the super-charge for time wasted in a port)."

One more quotation from Dr. Borsa: " England has made the great mistake of entirely neglecting the Italian market, with the consequence that the Germans seized the opportunity of occupying the field. England is now

devoting herself to the reparation of this blunder and of others committed by her traders and manufacturers. Let us hope that it is not too late."

Let me also borrow a few passages from *L'Inghilterra nel Grande Conflitto* (England in the Great Conflict), a volume of lively impressions by T. U. Tazzoli, published at Florence in 1915:

" English recruits," he says, " are all volunteers, and I think they have as a rule a degree of culture and education absolutely superior to that of the average in conscripted armies: they are assimilated more promptly, and can adapt themselves more easily to the exigencies of their new life. I venture to add that English recruits display this superiority in their physical qualities also: their selection, given the exuberance of volunteers, is rather severe, and their habit of sporting exercises, for which the traditional English enthusiasm is notorious, renders their bodies agile and strong. . . . The English temperament, slightly impulsive, patient, always gay and ready for a joke, reveals itself in the songs and letters of the soldiers. The English are not prone to excitement—they prefer not to think about the war, and in the trenches they delight to receive newspapers with accounts of their favourite sports. One must not imagine, however, that their good humour and inclination to frivolity prevent their fighting valorously. It was thanks to English valour that the German advance at the end of August 1914 failed, and the English Press knew how to keep an opportune silence on the fact. . . . In no country is there so full an enjoyment of liberty as in England. It is the country where education and mutual respect are most widely spread, where a man's word is deemed sacred; English commerce is world-wide because it is established on a broad basis of honesty and self-respect. All opinions are tolerated here, as well as all sects and all nationalities; people are always ready for discussion, even in the public streets as well as in warm, elegant drawing-rooms, without

losing their calm or ceasing to respect an opponent's opinions. . . . In the Colonies, an Englishman reveals his great practical intuitions, his confidence in himself and in others, his courage in face of difficulties, his quickness in disentangling himself from scrapes, the obstinacy of his convictions, and his proud sense of energy and independence. Thus it has come to pass that, despite the violence of initial acts of dominion, relations of trust, confidence, and, later on, sympathy, establish themselves between native populations and English colonists; thus it has come to pass that the Romans and the English are the only peoples who have made themselves loved by subject races while making profit out of them, and sometimes oppressing them."

This opinion is endorsed by another Italian writer, Borgese, who wrote (in *La Nuova Germania*): "It is useful to remind those who do not know it that British rule is alone tolerated by negroes."

IV. THE ITALIAN EL DORADO

After the war there will probably be no more promising field for British enterprise than Italy.

The Germans had devoted many years to patient, laborious infiltration. Practically all the banks were in their hands, with branches in every town, almost in every big village, and these banks were employed to carry on a subtle campaign of conquest as dangerous as that of the Uhlans. Credit was offered lavishly, the only condition being that borrowers' books should be open to inspection. The result was that all the leading traders and manufacturers found themselves in the hands of German agents, who knew all the details of their affairs and could threaten ruin at any moment. Then came German traders and manufacturers, whose success could be assured by the easy process of cutting off their rivals' credit. No wonder that commercial and industrial Italy became a mere German colony.

When Italy entered the war, the commercial invasion was checked if not altogether stopped, though German imports still arrived through Switzerland and German firms continued in the names of accommodating Italians or allies or neutrals. But the trail of the Teuton has not yet been removed. All over the peninsula, one finds German goods still exposed in the shops. I have been offered German cigarettes at Savona, German needles at Naples, German note-paper at Capri, German matches in the Piazza di Spagna at Rome.

And unless great, quick precautions are taken, Germany will continue to dominate Italian trade after peace has been imposed upon her. For Italy cannot be immediately ready to create and organise a vast network of factories and shops and banks to supply all her needs. She cannot

embark upon that necessary task unaided. Knowledge as well as capital will be lacking. The Germans know this and are already preparing to resume their sway. The Italians will not welcome them back, but may have no alternative. The Americans are studying the ground with a view to securing some of the big profits which will be on offer, but they are afar off and cannot do very much. If British energy will only assert itself, it will be in our power to replace the Germans and occupy a commercial field worth at least a dozen colonies.

But in order to accomplish this there must be a radical alteration of British business methods.

Many years ago, I remember being told by the Bulgarian War Minister, " Your commercial methods are all wrong. We wanted some blue cloth for our uniforms and we invited a British firm to tender. The reply was that they had no blue cloth but could supply us with very nice green cloth. Now we knew that British cloth was the best and would last longest, but we happened to want blue cloth. So we bought it in Austria."

The same arrogant, ignorant attitude prevails among our traders to-day. We assume that all foreigners must understand our language, our peculiar weights, measures and coins; we rely so much on the proverb about good wine needing no bush that we expect people to ask us to sell instead of our asking them to buy; our consular service despises commerce and apes diplomacy without having acquired the elements of diplomacy.

Here is a characteristic incident. I was buying some shirts in Rome before the war. In came a supercilious English youth, who tried to explain in bad French that he represented a firm of hosiers. He showed samples of tight-fitting woollen underclothes and was told they would be useless. " Oh, very well," and he was about to depart when the shopman began to explain exactly what goods would satisfy the Italian market. The youth either did not understand or did not care. I offered to translate. He

gave me a withering look and said, " Thank you, I speak the language perfectly." A few days later, a German traveller came and secured a substantial order.

Again. The other day I learned that the Italian Admiralty was ready to buy almost any amount of wire-rope. So I wrote to a business friend in London and received the following reply, " My dear Vivian, I have found a firm, one of the best, able and willing to supply any quantity of wire-rope, either c.i.f. or f.o.b., but they cannot quote until they have a precise specification of what is wanted with an approximate idea of the quantities. Also with the usual reference to bankers or guarantees as to payment."

I pictured myself going to the Government and saying, " I have some wire-rope *perhaps*. I don't know the name of the firm, but they are one of the best. What do you want and what guarantee as to payment are you going to give me? Who are your bankers? "

We are not the only people trying to sell wire-rope and all the other things which Italy needs. I know of an American firm that has sent over a man with full credentials, samples of wire-rope, and exact prices. Is it surprising that he has already secured a large order?

Another essential is that British firms should acquire the rudiments of Italian business methods. Chief perhaps among these is the expectation of credit on a generous scale. It was by taking advantage of this that the Germans were able to cut out their rivals and secure a control of the Italian market. There is no necessity to take undue risks. With alert and intelligent agents, there need be no difficulty in discriminating where credit may safely be given. Nor need the credit be excessive. One-third of the price on order and the balance thirty days after receipt of documents would usually be considered satisfactory.

The chief point is that we must not open our mouths and expect business to fall into them. Nor need we go to

the opposite extreme and force business by means of espionage and blackmail, as the Germans did. We have the initial advantage that our goods are the best in the world. If we are able to push them with the ordinary zeal employed in ordinary commerce at home, adapting ourselves to the ideas of our prospective customers, the ball is at our feet. But the best goods will not sell themselves unaided abroad any more than at home. We must push, advertise, cry, run round, cut out as well as cut in. We must remember that there are always other men in the field, struggling very hard to palm off inferior articles, prepared to dump at a loss if necessary to secure a market, and backed up by consuls who shrink from none of the wiles of the worst commercial travellers. We must try at last to justify Napoleon's taunt and reveal ourselves as a nation of shop-keepers.

V. THE FUTURE

THE absolute bed-rock minimum reward, which must belong to Italy after the war, includes (1) " unredeemed Italy ": Trieste, Trento, etc.; (2) Istria, Dalmatia, Albania, and perhaps Epirus, certainly the restoration of the Venetian Empire and the absolute command of the Adriatic, which is historically and naturally an Italian sea; (3) the definite annexation of the Dodecanese and whatever other Turkish and Greek islands may be required for Italian penetration into Asia Minor. It will also be a graceful act on the part of France to restore Savoy and the Alpes Maritimes department.

There have been fears that the doctrine of nationalism may be pushed beyond reasonable limits and that attempts may be made to erect a Jugo-Slav empire under the sceptre of Peter Karageorgevitch. But Pashitch himself has prudently announced that Serbia aspires only to an outlet on the Adriatic. Montenegro will of course extend her borders considerably and there is no reason why Italy should grudge her the Bocche di Cattaro, especially in view of the family ties of the reigning houses. Indeed, a solution of the Balkan problem might well be found in the union of Serbian lands under the rule of the King of Montenegro. The Balkan problem, however, is likely to remain as puzzling as ever. To begin with, nationalities are so hopelessly interlaced that the amiable philosophies of nationalism do not apply; in any case, they cannot be applied to vermin like the Bulgars any more than they can be pleaded on behalf of the perpetuation of Prussia.

Offence has been given by the suggestion of an English publicist that Trieste, Italy's most coveted goal, should be made a free port and Fiume be given to Serbia. To add insult to injury, it has been hinted that Trieste, as an

Italian port, would constitute a serious rival to Venice, but wisely enough no attempt is made to explain why the rivalry would cease if Trieste were a free port or belonged to a foreigner.

A French writer, Jacques Bainville, asserts that Italy is not really anxious to see Austria break up. He assumes innocently that Germany will not be broken up too, and that she would therefore replace Austria as an undesirable neighbour to Italy. Indeed, he almost tries to persuade Italy that, as Germany went to war with the main object of enslaving Austria, it would be the patriotic act of a good European like Italy to thwart Germany by bolstering up Austria, if only as a buffer-state. The French certainly have all the charm of children.

One thing is certain, that Italy will be very busy after the war. Not only will she have to organise the administration of her vast new provinces, but she will have the heavy task of setting up new industries and commerce to replace those which the Huns have lately usurped. She may also find it necessary to reform her bureaucracy and parliamentary system, which have ceased to interpret the wisdom and integrity of a great and rapidly growing nation. She has shown herself so wise and brave during her time of trial that it is impossible to doubt her power of accomplishing the most arduous tasks and realising the loftiest destinies during the golden age which must soon dawn upon her pellucid horizon.



A Mountain Shelter

VI. THE ITALIAN TEMPERAMENT

LIKE the Italian language, the Italian temperament seems very easy to understand until one studies it seriously.

It is all in sharp black and white, or else in glaring colours. Red-hot ambitions and the slumber of lazzaroni, ideals and stilettoes, astuteness and generosity, wisdom and illiteracy, vendettas and good nature, superstition and unbelief, vanity and servility, roughness and courtesy, heroism and professional politics are all to be espied in the kaleidoscope.

In other words, Italians are very, very human. They take our breath away at first. Then we smile indulgently. Then we admire.

After all, there are lazzaroni everywhere—lazzaroni who gaped at football while their betters were in Flanders, lazzaroni who live on unearned increment, lazzaroni now once more on the Treasury Bench. Compared with these the Neapolitan slumberer has his points. His pleasures are harmless enough, and it is surely something to have reduced human needs to a nutshell. Blessed, moreover, is the land whose generous fertility maintains men almost without labour. There are many worse crimes than taking sun-baths and sucking oranges. And the lazzarone is far from representing Italy—almost as far as Giolitti.

Visit almost any country in the world and you will find Italians nearly as ubiquitous as Scots; and while the Scots win wealth by unproductive barter, the Italians create wealth by the sweat of their brows, cut continents, pierce Alps. I suppose there is scarcely a railway or engineering miracle that is not due to their patient industry. And what frugality, what self-sacrifice, what courage! Ardent lovers of their lovely land, they volunteer for exile during

the best years of their lives, stinting and starving themselves to maintain the old folks at home and hasten the happy return with the nest-egg.

And in Italy itself there is a high average of industry. Turin and Milan are hives. It is true that lack of capital has delayed home manufactures. Such simple necessaries as fishing-nets, needles, agricultural instruments, have nearly all been made in Germany. But this, like most of the world's woes, will be righted after the war. Allowance must be made for the extreme youth of the country. Scarcely two generations ago all development was impeded by alien or antiquated rule, and the strides since have been prodigious. Communications, drainage, irrigation, all the nursery business of a nation have had to be begun from the egg, and now compare favourably with those of older neighbours. Illiteracy remains unduly widespread, but its hindrances are mitigated by native shrewdness. And individual riches are accumulating everywhere at compound interest. In fertile regions, like Liguria, it is not unusual to find men with thousands of invested pounds, even millionaires in francs, who eat and dress like beggars and continue to live the lives of humble peasants. Elsewhere they would don black coats, rush to towns, and become indifferent lawyers or corrupt politicians. Here they are accumulating national strength in silence.

In politics, Italy has still much to learn, but that may be said of most countries. Until recently, elections depended upon men and money rather than on measures. International Jewry and secret societies paid the piper. Votes were openly bought and sold. A candidate's purse and personality counted much more than his principles. If there are any great statesmen, their reputation has yet to be made. The only man of mark is Giolitti, and his mark is a bad one. According to the whole Press and public opinion, he ought to be in gaol for fraud; he has been bribed by the Germans. Judas and Murray were

Paladins in comparison. Yet he recently commanded a large majority in the Chamber though he dared not show his face in the streets.

Salandra has come to the front slowly but surely. The story of his crisis in May 1915 reads like a scene in the *Grande Duchesse de Gérolstein.* He was Giolitti's warming-pan, dependent on a Giolittian majority. Knowing war to be necessary, but dreading a general election, he pretended to resign. The result was a riotous demonstration, carefully prepared, all over the peninsula. Old Garibaldians screamed themselves hoarse in the streets, students booed their professors, fishwives broke windows. This was recognised at once as the will of the people. Salandra's resignation was refused, the long-expected war broke out, surprising no one save stupid old Francis Joseph.

We are often taunted with blundering through, but in our darkest hours we never blundered through like that. It only shows the supreme unimportance of Parliament in Italy as elsewhere. Here we have a country, whose stereotyped constitutional machinery would have condemned it to worse ignominy than Greece, to the abandonment of all national aspirations, to a betrayal of European liberties. Yet a few newspaper articles and the cries of a few students apparently sufficed to restore the equilibrium of common sense. And all this when a large part of the population still wondered what all the fuss was about.

The fact is, Italy possesses an enormous substratum of patriotism. After England, I suppose there is no country so saturated with patriotism and sentiment. It is a fierce insular, or rather peninsular patriotism. At any moment, in any inn or coffee-house or train or other public resort, you will find men proclaiming the high destinies of Italy. The word Italy occurs at least once in every sentence. Patriotic phrases are read out of papers with infinite unction and *ore rotundo.*

Not the slightest account is taken of any other country save where it enters the Italian orbit. There is gratitude towards Great Britain, for instance, because she rendered Italian unity possible, but little regard for the fact that she has saved Europe from the power of the dog. Italians like us and imitate us, but they do not mean to put themselves out for any strangers. Nor can they be blamed for this. They have had so many difficulties and disappointments during their short life that a blend of cynicism is only to be expected in their sentimentality. And, after all, one must be hideously grown up before one learns to prefer the welfare of the world above the interests of his country.

Moreover, Italian history, with all its village wars and local fanaticism, has necessarily contracted the horizon. I have noticed, however, a distinct decrease in particularism during the last few years. It is not long since a Neapolitan regarded a Piedmontese as a foreigner, resenting his maturer civilisation. But now you may find all glorying in the Italian name.

Examine the Italian army, for instance. It is drawn from the most dissimilar regions. Greeks, Thracians, Phœnicians have contributed their blood to the race; there are aboriginal remnants in Sicily, Liguria, the Abruzzi, and migration has been rare even to the present day. Yet every soldier reveals a common type and character. There is actually a common physiognomy, that enables one to recognise an Italian as readily as a Chinaman or a Hun. One great help towards unification has been the compulsory teaching of Italian throughout the peninsula, in most parts almost as a second tongue.

I have also been revising my views on the courage of Italians. They admit themselves that they are very easily elated and very easily depressed, but I think their periods of elation are longer and stronger than those of despair. It is true that they had been unfortunate in their wars, but this may have been due to defects of organisation

or generalship. And now the whole world rings with their heroism.

Their cult of the stiletto requires explanation but is not unexplainable. After all, it requires some pluck to fight with knives instead of fists. And dastardly blows have gone out as utterly as the cups of the Borgias. If an offence has been committed and it can be wiped out only with blood, the offender receives due warning and perambulates dark lanes at his peril. It is merely a rude form of duello. I have seen educated Italians quite angry with the inhabitants of certain districts, Liguria, for instance, where the knife is unfashionable: " If a man steals your wife or ruins your daughter, and you allow him to live, your veins must run with milk instead of blood." All the same, the despised legislature has done wonders in discouraging the national tendency to stab. It is almost a penal offence to carry so much as a pen-knife of more than certain slender dimensions.

During the mobilisation, I thought I noticed a general reluctance to go to the Front. Men said openly, quite as a matter of course, that they hoped to be let off; and those who were exempted received hearty congratulations from all their friends. I remember reading out a letter from a youth in the British lines, regretting that he had not yet been under fire and hoping for better luck soon. This was received almost with incredulity and confirmed the common belief in the madness of the English. All the same, patriotic Italians have been hurrying to the colours from all parts of the world, leaving families, salaries, prospects, in prompt answer to their country's call.

If Italians are not for ever extolling their own courage, like the French, they have plenty of brave deeds to their credit. Here is an example. In July 1900, Admiral Seymour despatched an international company, including eighteen Italian sailors, to Pekin. A sudden onslaught of Boxers sent the French, Russian, and American members

of the force flying in a panic, and the whole company would have been destroyed had not the Italians stood firm and repelled the attack with a loss of half their men. And the French officer in command was loyal enough to report their prowess without regard for the sorry figure cut by his compatriots.

The army has been reproached with lack of discipline, especially by Huns, who regard men as machines. This means only that Italian soldiers are careless about saluting and do not hesitate to join their officers at a coffee-house table. The army, indeed, is more like a family than a machine. In many countries, a recruit is tormented and ridiculed and subjected to horse-play. In Italy, no trouble is spared to help him and teach him and make him feel at home. The result is that he is always good-humoured and anxious to do even more than his duty.

Italian soldiers, like the French, possess considerable initiative: give them an order and you may trust them to carry it out in the best way suggested by circumstances. Their calmness makes them very trusty in tight corners, and they are famed for their sobriety. Oddly enough, the sobriety increases as their place of origin is more southern. A Piedmontese will have his glass of wine a day; a Tuscan or an Umbrian perhaps half that measure; a Calabrian or a Sicilian nothing stronger than water. Indeed, I am told, it is a Sicilian soldier's ambition to accumulate his pay of a *soldo* a day until he can afford to buy a silver watch and chain. What a lesson for the Huns, who have quicker ways of acquiring timepieces!

I confess that I was surprised to find calmness and sobriety among Italian soldiers, for those qualities are not conspicuous among the same men in their civilian life. As in most wine-lands, intoxication is not very common, but it is by no means rare. With most other failings, it is viewed with infinite indulgence by this easy-going race. When a man becomes disorderly or incapable he attracts far more pity than censure. "Poor unfortunate

fellow," I have heard again and again, " one must have patience with him! He would not behave like that if he had not taken too much wine." The same sympathy is extended to lunatics, and they are not shut up till they become quite intolerable.

Some Italians may be calm, but I confess I have never met them, except perhaps in the South, where they are least expected. As I write, I can hear yells in the dining-room two floors below. Anywhere else, I should adumbrate a free fight. But I know it is only the village postmaster gossiping with the mayor's secretary. Though they sit scarcely two feet apart, they always yell if anything interests them. When half a dozen middle-class Tuscans are gathered together, they render all other conversation impossible. I believe they consider it manly to make a noise—the more noise the manlier. They will cry, " How d'ye do? " in the tones of one picking a quarrel.

But they are far more courteous than the corresponding French. They are always ready to inconvenience themselves to do a service. Ask your way and they may reply roughly, but they will not hesitate to walk half a mile to put you right. They are full of phrases, bidding you good-day and good appetite and good repose and a pleasant walk; and their bows are as frequent as their compliments. All this without the faintest tinge of civility. They might be said to damn with loud praise. Yet no one would be more surprised than they if you resented their abruptness. Indeed, their deadliest insult is to call a man *ignorante*, which does not mean ignorant, but ill-bred.

Ladies have had reason to complain of the freedom of Italian manners in the street, especially at Rome, and more especially since the war. Groups of over-dressed youths stand at corners and make loud comments on the looks of any lady who attracts their notice. And remonstrances are quite useless; it is the custom of the country,

and they can conceive no reason why they should not express their thoughts.

They still regard their own women with a half-oriental eye. Except among the upper classes, who are rather cosmopolitan than Italian, a wife has to fetch and carry, sit at home and sew, ask leave for every action. There would be quite a scandal in the neighbourhood if two or three gentlemen came to call during her husband's absence. Among the peasants, she is almost a beast of burthen. I know one who carries 213 lbs. of coal on her head, sometimes for miles.

As for jealousy, it varies very much according to latitude. It can scarcely be said to exist in the North, but woe betide the rash man found stealing glad glances in Sicily or Calabria.

Good nature and good humour are, however, generally characteristic. Fierce passions are quickly roused but as quickly subdued. Your Italian is, above all, easy-going. This is illustrated by his laws, which are terribly elaborate but rarely enforced. Lawsuits, even criminal cases are often spun out for years. Oddly enough, there is no capital punishment in this land, which holds human life in very low esteem.

Officials abound. They love a lord and are dreaded by the poor, who will submit to a great deal rather than walk into their parlours. If you have any trouble with village tradesmen, or the washerwoman's husband has been telling tales against you, the mere threat to complain to the sergeant of carbineers suffices to bring them to their knees. And such difficulties may occur often if you happen to be short of temper. For Italians are very sensitive about their dignity. Abuse, or even blows, they might pass over, or answer with a short, sharp storm of expletives from their very rich vocabulary. But ridicule or contempt cuts them to the quick. Then they fall back on their favourite form of emphasis, which is to invoke the most frightful calamities all round.

Here is a typical scene. Mr. and Mrs. Smith are in the habit of paying all their bills every quarter, when his income reaches him. At the end of June, he happened to go away for a few days on a visit. Mrs. Pippo, who keeps the wine-shop, told Mrs. Tito of the general store that she believed he had gone for good, and she hoped there might be an accident to his train or that he might have a paralytic stroke. Anyhow, she was going to call on Mrs. Smith and demand her money. Mrs. Tito repeated this to Jolanda, the servant, who promptly told Mrs. Smith.

Mrs. Pippo duly called, but said nothing about payment, so Mrs. Smith taxed her with her gossip. Mrs. Pippo raised both arms towards the ceiling and broke out into a wild tirade: "May the Madonna strike me dead this very instant as I stand here if I said the least little disrespectful word about Signor Smith. I have always had the most implicit confidence in him."

"Then why are you paying me a visit for the first time in six years? I say you have lost confidence."

"If I lost confidence during the twinkle of an eye, may God and His holy angels cast me down your stairs and kill me on the spot!"

"Good-bye. Go down carefully."

Whereas practically every transaction in France is for ready money only, there is a very general and pernicious system of credit in Italy. Nearly all the poor are in chronic debt. Everybody knows all the details of everybody else's business, and therefore exactly how much credit to allow. One result is that, as soon as a peasant is in a tradesman's books, it is impossible ever to leave him, however bad his wares may be.

It is a subtle form of slavery. But no one seems to mind very much. A few grumbles and such trifles are forgotten. After all, it is very wrong to fall into debt.

The happy-go-lucky sense has a touch of Irishry. So has the utter indifference to time. No apology is ever

made for keeping you waiting, however long. It is always a toss-up whether a definite appointment will be kept. Then "Oh! I had something else to do" is quite a sufficient excuse. Meals appear whenever the cook happens to be hungry. If you do not care to await his pleasure, an innkeeper is quite ready to let you depart.

Food is savoury and nourishing if monotonous, but no one cares whether it is hot or cold: indeed, it is usually lukewarm. Italian cooking is much better than the *cuisine bourgeoise* of France, good oil being preferable to bad butter. And the cheapness of everything! Some one ought to start a macaroni mission to our slums.

Irish, too, is the semi-feudal fidelity and familiarity. A burgher's servant will stroll in, almost slap him on the back, break into his conversation, pick things off his table, volunteer gossip, even shake hands and sit down uninvited. But she never says a thing isn't her job, she will perform the most surprising services unasked, she is a member of the family below the salt.

You can readily rouse the anger of Italians by reminding them that many great critics dismiss Verdi, Mascagni, Puccini as insipid. Italians sing a great deal at odd moments, and their songs are certainly full of sunshine, but is there much soul in their vocal exercises? Will they ever outgrow "Santa Lucia"? At any rate, they are purging themselves of a threatened infection of German music.

Undeterred by the severity of Dante, they search, mark, quote him as assiduously as though his were holy writ. Here is an instance. There is a wonderful fishing village in Liguria, that remained for centuries a Sovereign Republic. Dante barked his shins scrambling over precipices thither and consigned it to Purgatory in consequence. "*Discendesi in Noli*" was the curt comment of the immortal bard—"I got out at Noli!" And this has been carved in marble and set up on the wall of Noli's arcade, as though it added to Noli's fame. After

all, we are just as indulgent towards the boredom of Shakespeare.

Italy now yearns to breed more poets, if only out of patriotic pride in Dante. During the spring of 1915 the poet d'Annunzio became the prime national hero. His fiery speeches contributed as much as anything towards Italy's awakening against the Huns, though he had been rather a failure as a politician. The studied obscurity of his poetry must keep it from the ken of the masses, but it is the name of poet which conjures for him in Italy. Whereas he seems to have done very well as an aviator.

Imagine a British workman exclaiming in August 1914: "Fine fellow that Bridges. Poet Laureate and all that sort of thing. Successor to our great national glory, William Shakespeare. If he tells us to go in and save Belgium, it must be a bit of all right."

One of the many charms of modern Italians is that they reach the right end by the most fantastic of ways.

The probable fact is that they are a practical people and know at the back of their heads that the arts do not matter in the least—matter just as little as scarlet coats and gold braid in the trenches. I find most of them admit this in private conversation. The best patriots are heartily sick of being regarded as cloak-room attendants at museums or the showmen of Europe's playground.

Note the same common sense in their conjugal affairs. They vent their superfluous energies in talking and writing and singing of love whenever the moon shines. But their marriages are the coldest commercial transactions, deals in dowries, made in musty offices rather than in twilight lanes. Yet they are perhaps the most successful marriages in the world. Quite ill-assorted couples muddle through by dint of easy-going give and take.

Morals are well preserved, at least among unmarried women, for public opinion bars all the avenues of flirtation relentlessly. Walking out with a young man would warn off all serious swains, sign the death-warrant of

all matrimonial hopes. And prudery is deep-seated. The nude is held to be very rude. Even at smart bathing-resorts women enter the sea almost with court trains. I have seen notices in churches threatening excommunication for the " immoral and indecent practice " of going about with bare necks.

Religion survives in a dilettante way: first through pride in Rome; next through an innocent pleasure in glittering altars and pretty processions.

But the crowd's attitude is formal or patronising rather than reverent. All hats are doffed at the passage of an image, but that does not exclude laughing chatter. The churches are fairly well filled by a large percentage of women.

Watch a couple of girls come in. They fumble for the holy water, nod to the altar, and snatch chairs. The method of kneeling is airily graceful. Tilt a chair towards you at an angle of forty-five degrees, press one knee against its seat, and you have a charming pose. For choice, the two friends will retire to a quiet corner, lean well back and converse right merrily until the service is over. They might be paying the Almighty an afternoon call.

Yet, in the South at least, there is a serious, sometimes fanatical attachment to the Roman creed. A sneering Protestant or atheist may be bustled or bonneted during a procession. Vows to saints are very fervent in times of stress, and votive offerings are duly paid. The Saints occur as frequently in conversation as the gods did when Rome was picturesque. Take San Gennaro at Naples. Hideous calamities are anticipated if his blood does not liquefy quickly on the days of his feast. I have seen dense crowds of women prostrate before his golden image. They treated him as though he were a living grandee. First they flattered him and made extravagant promises. Then they wheedled and implored. Then they grew familiar and asked him what he was waiting for and told him to hurry

up. Then they called him old yellow-face and pig. At last they poured forth the foulest insults and curses. And, as soon as the blood liquefied, they broke out into wildest gratitude and praise. Still, the whole people will always support the State whenever it comes into conflict with the Church.

All of which enforces my argument that there is subtlety in Italian simplicity, a shrewd side to every Italian ideal. And in the right spirit of paradox, an Italian is eager to flaunt, even exaggerate, his cunning.

Above his old masters, his solemn Dante, his pompous Petrarch, his florid Rome, he places the intense sharpness of his native wits. They amount to intuitions in debate, diplomacy, commerce, and other struggles for life. He has a deep detective instinct always at work, or at play. It may lead him to over-reach himself, but it affords him his fair share of fun. When he is harshly taunted with being disingenuous, he can smile over the reflection that he is at the same time the most ingenuous of men. I wish that those who traduce the memory of Machiavelli would take the trouble to read him and see how reasonable and moral he is even in his frankest moments.

The vulgar idea about Italy's long delay to declare war was that she had put herself up to Dutch auction. But the real explanation is that she perceived all the difficulties in her path, and was honestly desirous of intervening at the right moment. There were fools and knaves to be overcome at home as well as abroad; the months were well spent in perfecting armaments as well as arguments; it was only sensible to ascertain first what she stood to win before risking millions of men and millions of money.

Among the above-mentioned knaves and fools who obstruct the progress of Italy the most dangerous may be members of her effete, half-alien aristocracy The whole caste must not be attacked, for seven of the Colonnas and others bearing historic names have been among the first

to volunteer for the Front. But a large number of the nobility have married Germans, are international rather than Italian, and openly sneer at Italian aspirations. Though they live apart and live chiefly for pleasure, their influence remains great in a land that loves lords. Even in their sports, they hold aristocratically aloof instead of giving a healthy lead.

The country, however, is ripe for sporting development. It seems quite a distant day since the leisure of Latins was devoted to sipping syrups or playing baby-billiards. Contrast the Italians with the French, who now excel at many sports and rarely become sportsmen.

Every Italian youth finds a natural joy in games, second only to that of the English. On any village green you may see an eager crowd battling with an india-rubber ball about twice the size of a cricket ball, striking it with naked fists for thirty or forty yards. This is doubtless an offspring of *Pallone*, the ball game of Tuscany, which is played on huge courts with a sort of porcupine gauntlet instead of a racket, and always attracts enormous crowds.

Football has also widespread popularity and has conferred distinction on many native teams. And be it noted (happy omen!) that Italy defeated Austria as well as France and Switzerland at football. Cycling and gymnastics are also followed with success. On village sands it is by no means unusual to see small boys perform long-arm balance and difficult circus-tricks very cleverly. The long coast-line has enabled a large population to excel at boating and fishing. Fencing has always been a special Italian art, and boxing is coming rapidly into vogue.

The sole remaining hindrance to sport is found in the fact that most Italians grow obese at an early age. Then they sink to what they term hunting. This means that they take a dog and a gun and spend the whole day wandering about the fields in search of little birds. On at least half the enclosures you espy a notice of " hunting prohibited," which means that the little birds are pre-

served by the landowner. As most of the little birds have been exterminated long ago, this does not matter very much. A fat man can still reduce his corpulence by hunting snarks.

To sum up Italians, the better they are known, the more they please. They have shaken off the heavy, strenuous, half-bred, cruel, sulky, vulgar pessimism of the bygone nineteenth century and risen to the easy, kindly tolerance which characterises the present age. Best of companions, merry, genial, thoughtful, ingratiating, lovable in their pretty little poses and harmless vanities, they are the true sons of the morning. Their lives are full of colour, their ideas are acquiring perspective, they are live old masters.

Or perhaps they are the Vivian Grey of Europe, the ambitious youth now past the threshold of his career, within sight of the world's Treasury Bench.

The prime secret of their success lies probably in their good humour during adversity, in the lightness of their serious moods, in the mental science of their national therapeutics.

I have endeavoured to depict them indifferently, admitting, perhaps over-emphasising, shadows that can only make the higher lights more clear. I hope that they will not resent my frankness, remembering always that praise from an Englishman is praise indeed.

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